

Alton Community Panel Meeting Notes (draft)

12 May 2026: Housing Design



Main aim of meeting: Understand what currently shapes home design in regeneration and development projects, then discuss what would make a good new home on the Alton from the resident perspective.

Panel Members: Albert Balogun, Asma Choudhry, Sandra Claringbould, Tatiana Dobрева, Charles Einloth (online), Simone Johns, Orleen Mcintosh, Jo Playford, Angus Robertson.

Others at meeting: **Alton Renewal Team:** Kate Batchelor (Head of Place Programme), Jo Baxter (Community Engagement & Cultural Coordinator), Charlotte Rowlands (Project Assistant) & Anna Singleton (Head of Alton Regeneration). **Architects HTA:** Tanatswa Borerwe, Iain Sherman & Lucy Smith. **Third-Party Chair:** Daisy Froud.

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

- 1. New venue:** Focus Hall worked well spatially, but the poor acoustics (and strange beeping) need addressing. The Hall has now been booked for the second Tuesday of each month through til end 2026.
- 2. Local election results:** it was too early to know what the change in administration means for the Masterplan. This would become clearer over May and June as the new Council leadership takes shape. For the time being, meetings will focus on broader topics on which it is still useful to gather residents' perspectives. Once there is more clarity, we can then look at the detailed programme for 2026 building on Panel priorities from April.
- 3. June Alton Masterplan drop-in event:** this too has been postponed until there is more clarity on next steps.
- 4. Recruiting younger residents to the Panel:** this process was underway with a deadline of 1 June to apply. We are looking for three young people aged 18–30 to join the panel. Members were encouraged to spread the word.
- 5. Confirming whether the mural artists are Alton residents:** we are still waiting to hear back from the relevant Team on this and should have that information in June. We do know however that they are *local* artists.
- 6. Member item: several local groups are concerned about what the election outcome might mean for agreed renewal plans** and are collaborating to make the case for continuing with them. Resident testimonies will be key to this. Angus encouraged Panel members who would like to contribute to contact him outside the meeting.

B. Understanding what shapes housing design

Iain presented on (i) **factors that shape design** on projects like the Masterplan, including regulations, policy and financial viability and (ii) **what this means for how flats and blocks are typically laid out.**

Detailed slides have been shared separately, including the table (right).

Panel questions

- 1. Will balcony sizes range? How large will they be? Many older residents enjoy gardening and would hope to continue.** Wandsworth's policy is 10 sqm (square metres) for 1- or 2-bedroom homes, and 15sqm for 3 bedrooms and above. This is much larger than the GLA's minimum (*right*).

Alton masterplan - Housing parameters			
<p>Regulations</p> <p>Fire safety Tall buildings (over 6 storeys): 2 staircases Smoke control Corridor length restrictions</p> <p>Access (Part M) Buildings must be accessible Level approach Width of lobbies and corridors 10% are wheelchair adapted</p> <p>Energy (Part L) Efficient external walls / roof Air tight Efficient heating (no boilers) Reduce CO2 emissions Daylight / sunlight testing</p> <p>Windows (Part O) Reduced window sizes Overheating concerns Window shading</p> <p><i>Comparison: Old vs. New Existing Alton 3B maisonette - 77 sqm Equivalent new maisonette - 93 sqm</i></p>	<p>Policy</p> <p>GLA Minimum sizes: 1 Bed - 50sqm, 2 Bed - 70 sqm 3 Bed - 86 sqm, 4 Bed - 99 sqm</p> <p>Minimum storage provision: 1 Bed - 1.5sqm, 2 Bed - 2 sqm 3 Bed - 2.5 sqm, 4 Bed - 3 sqm</p> <p>External frontage: 1 person bedroom - 2.15 m 2 person bedroom - 2.75 m</p> <p>Living space minimum sizes: 1 Bed - 23 sqm, 2 Bed - 27 sqm 3 Bed - 29 sqm, 4 Bed - 31 sqm</p> <p>Balcony sizes: 1 Bed - 5 sqm, 2 Bed - 7 sqm 3 Bed - 8 sqm, 4 Bed - 9 sqm</p> <p>Most family homes should be dual aspect (windows on 2 sides)</p> <p>Wandsworth Additional requirements and standards, for example: Balcony sizes are much bigger</p>	<p>Efficiency (viability)</p> <p>Floor Areas Have a direct relationship to cost. Oversized homes have little to no additional value. Circulation and service areas need to be as efficient as possible. This is the NIA / GIA ratio which affects deliverability</p> <p>External Walls Have a direct relationship to cost. Complex and undulating facades and features increase cost.</p> <p>Floor Area ratio The relationship of floor area to external facade. A circle is most efficient Rational shapes are best</p> <p>Viability A complex assessment of building cost, funding, market value, and deliverability.</p>	<p>Service requirements</p> <p>Bins Wandsworth has policy requirements related to homes: Re-cycling volumes per flat Waste volumes per flat Food waste volumes per flat Bulky waste areas</p> <p>Location of bins stores: Close to highway (within 10m)</p> <p>Bikes GLA directs policy for number of cycle parking bays and stores: Stacked bays 'Sheffield' bays Cargo / accessible bays</p> <p>Plant space Engineering spaces related to: Electrical switch rooms Sprinkler pumps and tanks (large) Heating equipment In home requirements</p> <p>Locations Most plant spaces need to be at ground floor level.</p>

Alton Masterplan - ACP meeting - May 2026

2. **What does ‘minimum storage provision’ on the chart above cover?** It refers to internal ‘built-in’ storage.
3. **What does ‘living space’ cover?** The total living, kitchen and dining space, whether open-plan or separate.
4. **The table says, “no boilers”, so how will heating work?** Traditional boilers are being phased out to reduce carbon emissions, replaced by more efficient systems, usually communal or centralised heating that can use green energy, through methods such as air-source heat pumps on roofs that extract heat from the air. Today’s homes often also have underfloor heating instead of radiators. This is more efficient in well-insulated buildings.
5. **How is electricity paid for?** This is determined with specialist energy consultants as part of an Energy Strategy. They review designs and work with the Council to determine the most appropriate and efficient system, including how costs are managed. If interest, this could be discussed in more detail at a later session.
6. **Would external doors be accessible only by residents?** Yes.
7. **How will rubbish be managed?** These days residents normally bring their waste down to designated bin areas. Bin chutes are expensive to install, often too small for practical use, and come with management and maintenance challenges. *It was acknowledged that this system can be more difficult for older residents.*
8. **Would bathrooms have daylight?** Normally not. Efficient building design means that spaces that need natural light, such as living areas and bedrooms, are located on building facades. Spaces that don’t, such as bathrooms and storage, then sit at the centre of the building.

One Member noted that despite theoretical improvements in housing design and layout, many recent buildings in Wandsworth still have issues, such as poor intercom systems and inadequately sized windows.



C. Links to current relevant Housing Design Standards – as requested by Members

The GLA/ Mayor of London’s [London Plan Housing Design Guidance](#) setting out key requirements.

Chapter 17 of **Wandsworth’s Local Plan: ‘Providing Housing’**, particularly **Policy LP27** (p359) on **Housing Standards**.

Wandsworth’s Housing and Regeneration Department’s [Housing Service Standards](#).

The UK [Building Regulations](#) – construction standards to ensure buildings are safe, sustainable and accessible.

D. Small Group Discussion Topics

1. **In detail: What does and doesn’t work about current Alton homes?** This is vital information for architects, helping ensure frustrations are not replicated, and that, where possible, valued aspects can shape new designs.
2. **More lightly: Initial Panel thoughts on approach to layout of new blocks and homes.** Members were encouraged to send further thoughts post meeting. We could also discuss priorities further at a later session.

See [Pages 3 and 4: ACP Views on Housing Design](#) for a summary of what was shared.

NEXT MEETING: Tues 9 June, 3.30 to 6.00pm. This will be a workshop led by Social Life, the consultants who are preparing a brief for a **Social Impact Assessment (SIA)**. The SIA will allow the Council to track the long-term impacts of regeneration on residents. Panel discussion will help decide what should be tracked or measured and why, and the ways in which consultants will be expected to work with residents to do that.

THINGS PEOPLE LIKE ABOUT THEIR HOMES ON THE ALTON NOW

Qualities that ideally new homes would have as well.



THE VIEWS

Good ones from high up, views of trees and greenery from kitchens, and while lying in bed, and practical ones too: able to watch kids play from kitchen window.



ACCESS TO NATURE, GREEN & THE OUTDOORS

Space out front where children can safely play, front and back gardens - including doors opening onto them from living room, good-sized balconies, and easy access to space for events.



THE WINDOWS

Large, wide, lots of natural light, outward opening, and match standard blinds and curtains. *BUT... some are hard to clean (pivot backwards or have an unopenable central pane that can't be opened and make ventilation harder.) In Winstanley they pivot all the way round which is much easier.*



SOME GENEROUS ROOM SIZES

Including big living rooms, some large (square) bedrooms.

As well as...

Good **neighbours**, design that support **neighbourliness** (shared landings, communal meeting room), **separate living rooms and kitchens**, the **2-floor layout**, and good **storage**.



THINGS PEOPLE FIND FRUSTRATING ABOUT THEIR HOMES ON THE ALTON NOW

Qualities that ideally would not be carried over into new homes.



MOULD

Poor ventilation



SMALL OR ODDLY SHAPED ROOMS

Particularly **kitchens**, especially in 3 beds, with not enough work surface, and **bathrooms + toilets**.

Some bedrooms too (e.g. one next to boiler room): make it hard to lay out furniture or fix things easily and can feel congested.



STORAGE

Poorly designed, and not enough.



COMMUNAL AREAS

Narrow, dark hallways, hard to clean, "disgusting", and easily flooded, pigeons get in.



NARROW FRONT DOORS

Hard to move and get furniture in and out.

As well as...

Warren like rooms (more open plan could be good), bathrooms where it is **hard to fit showers** to make them accessible; **no basins** in downstairs loos, **cold bathrooms**, separate hot and cold **taps**; lack of **dining space**/ space to eat together; **front doors without porches** where you get wet in the rain; **poor security** for external doors (you get followed); poor **intercom systems**; **overlooking** and **food smells** from neighbours; poor **noise** insulation; bulky inefficient **heating systems**; interruptions to **water supply**; **steep stairs** in maisonettes, and stairs **without handrails**; vulnerable **end of terrace homes** where windows get smashed; **dumping**.

THINGS TO BE THOUGHT ABOUT OR ADDRESSED IN THE DESIGN OF NEW HOMES



1. **WINDOW DESIGN.** Floor to ceiling windows are not good in bedrooms and can make it hard to lay out your furniture in any room. Oddly shaped windows, including windows that go round corners can make fitting curtains and blinds expensive (better to have two windows that meet at the corner). Outward opening windows are preferred.



2. **OPEN PLAN OR SEPARATE KITCHEN AND LIVING?** Views range but in multi-generational homes (very common among some cultural groups) separate tends to be better. Open plan also means food smells in living area.



3. **STORAGE.** Utility cupboards are good: you need space for laundry, sheets and towels. Bathrooms in family homes need enough storage for everyone. Storage design needs to be clever: avoid deep cupboards where the back becomes dead space, but walk in cupboards can be good.



4. **BLOCK DESIGN.** Buildings need to 'fit' architecturally, and allow the landscape to 'speak'. **Note:** naming is also important.



5. **ENTRANCES.** Should feel colourful and welcoming, with flowers, and also safe: each block should its own fob/key for security, and intercom systems be clear, visual (with cameras) and easy to use.



6. **LOBBIES.** Should feel welcoming, with warm and neutral colours, artwork, good lighting (recessed spotlights?), seating and features like community libraries to encourage socialising, without behaviour signs everywhere. Parcels need to have somewhere safe (they go missing currently), and post boxes need to be theftproof. Also pigeonholes maybe?



7. **CORRIDORS.** To be wide – enough for buggies and shopping, and to feel sociable. Perhaps with noticeboards.



8. **BINS.** Bin cupboard doors would ideally be accessible from lobby; no-one wants to go out in bad weather to the bin. Also well-designed to avoid "bin juice". **Note:** Iain clarified that fire regulations mean this cannot viably be achieved in most new homes. The bins would need their own ventilated lobby which both takes up space and requires mechanical ventilation.

9. **OTHER THOUGHTS:** balconies relationship to bedrooms – one group wanted bedrooms to have access to balcony too rather than just a window, another said: "*preference for balconies to be seen from separate bedrooms that front onto balconies*"; "*enough space in front of dining table for guests*"; built-in shower trays needed in baths; query as to whether homes will come with white goods like washing machines.