

Alton Community Panel Meeting Notes

Meeting 2 – 20 May 2025



Aim of the meeting: This was the Panel’s first formal meeting, after a Welcome Session on 6 May. It focused on

- (i) **sharing more core information on the approach to estate renewal**, and
- (ii) **deeper discussion of the Alton’s character/identity as a place and community**, to help ensure that residents’ experiences of the estate, and what they value, can meaningfully inform change.

Panel members: Albert Balogun, Asma Choudhry, Tatiana Dobрева, Charles Einloth, Amanuel Gebrekidan, Simone Johns, Nusrat Mahmood, Orleen Mcintosh, George Mills, Cameron Paul, Jane Pavitt, Jo Playford, Angus Robertson

Plus, apologies from: Sandra Claringbould, Nashaun Johns

Others at meeting: 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, Third Party Chair Daisy Froud, and Cllr. Jenny Yates, Roehampton ward councillor, and Cabinet Member for Transport. (Local councillors are invited to attend every second meeting as observers.)

A. Understanding and communicating the renewal programmes – Part 2

Detailed slides presented on the night are shared separately.

Kate provided more detail on the structure and funding of the **Alton Renewal Plan (ARP)**, and the potential role of the Panel to support good decision-making within this, building on information shared at the Welcome Session.

- The Plan has **6 ‘pillars’**, identified through previous community engagement - **Community Facilities, Neighbourhood, Accessibility, Homes, Economic Inclusion, and Environment**. This structured approach helps ensure the Council uses resources efficiently.
- Each pillar involves several **projects – 30 to 40 in total** – with a £5 million budget. Some are **capital projects** (investment in physical ‘things’ like buildings, paths, signage and art), and some are **revenue projects** (funding for services or activities such as specialist staff, art and nature programmes, and grants.)
- **The Lighting Strategy is an example capital project.** Lighting across the Alton is being assessed to see what needs repairing or upgrading. Panel discussion, alongside expert input, could directly inform decisions about improvements. Wider consultation would continue alongside e.g. residents identifying where better lighting is needed.

PILLAR 1 Community Facilities	PILLAR 2 Neighbourhood	PILLAR 3 Accessibility	PILLAR 4 Homes	PILLAR 5 Economic Inclusion	PILLAR 6 Environment
Roehampton Family Hub	Community Safety Support	Church Landed community hub	Trinity Way development	Bank Place	Marjorie
Community Wellbeing Activation	Roehampton PCO Community Centre	Expansion of University of Roehampton site	Land adjacent to Farnborough House	Culture Programmes	Widower Institute
Community Growth Programme	Provision of the Endowments	Pedestrian assessment improvements	Roehampton Road Development	Focus Hall activation	Community Businesses
After Activity Centre Play & Access Improvements	Partnership works to reduce congestion, signage	Openable routes	Planning Regeneration Programme	Creativity in Roehampton schools	
Operational Fields Improvements	Highway and Heritage Trail	Carriage support		Disabled improvements	
Roehampton Community Hall	Gateway artwork	Carriage for better buses			
School WMC support	Urban Centre Walkway	Access to Richmond Park			
	Lighting Strategy	Car Clubs			
	Plants				

Lucy shared more information on the **Housing Regeneration Programme**. This sits as a **project in the Homes Pillar** but with its own budget of about £100 million. Lucy summarised the vision for each of its 5 areas (right).



Panel members asked for more detail on:

- **How the Homes Pillar and the Housing Regeneration inter-relate.** What’s the overlap? What’s the difference?
- **The process and timings for the five Renewal Areas.** Will this happen all at once, or be phased? And how will that be managed in terms of impacts on residents?
- **Plans for the old Library space by Albrook House.** This is not shown within the ‘red line’ on the plan above.
- **How the wider community can find out about**, and stay up to date with, **ARP activities and progress.**

- How **mechanisms for (i) acting on community feedback** and **(ii) evaluation**, are built into the programme.
- **How the impact of proposed changes on existing residents will be meaningfully captured and assessed.** Will a **Social Impact Assessment** be carried out? This is different to a traditional Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA), in that it (i) centres residents' experience, allowing them to help decide what is measured, and (ii) focuses on how change is felt at the level of *everyday life*: residents' routines, experiences, and perceptions of wellbeing. Something like that seems essential for a project with the ARP's ambitions.

Answers to these questions are in the Q&A doc, covering Sessions 1 & 2, shared with these Notes (**Extra Info #1**)

B. Understanding identity as a design 'tool' on the Alton.

Lucy and Daisy explained the importance of taking time early in a programme to see and understand a place like the Alton through residents' eyes, experiences and emotions (how people *feel* about the estate).

If you understand what residents value about a place already and want to preserve, as well as what they hope to change, then better decisions can be taken, and design developed. Each project – from buildings to signage, from artwork to block names - can ensure it reflects or enhances an estate's existing and evolving identity, bringing improvement, but also contributing to maintaining a place that 'belongs' to residents - that they recognise as home.

HTA have already done some work to understand the Alton's identity through community engagement - Lucy's slides on this are shared separately. However, **the Panel offers a forum first to capture something more explicitly** – see **Section C** and **then to ensure, through its work, that this is applied to projects.**

Panel members images and texts re what they value or see as special on the Alton

These, shared in advance and displayed on the night (*below*) are included with these Notes as **Extra Info #2/**



Common themes identified by the Panel

- **Balance of natural/green and built spaces:** people value all of the Alton's green spaces and greenery. And there's something unique and special about how they sit alongside the modern architectural buildings.
- **Peacefulness:** many images conveyed a sense of calm. Will the redevelopment preserve this peaceful character – seen as so vital by residents?
- **Community:** several photos foreground the Alton's people: "the human element is central".
- **Hidden gems and unexpected details:** features that are not immediately visible, often linked to the Alton's heritage or to local history e.g.
 - **statues** (including famous ones) installed when the estate was built, now tucked behind hedges. Some were even stolen in the past and have had to be replaced!
 - **features of buildings**, often quite extraordinary and sculptural, such as the trumpet-like water towers.

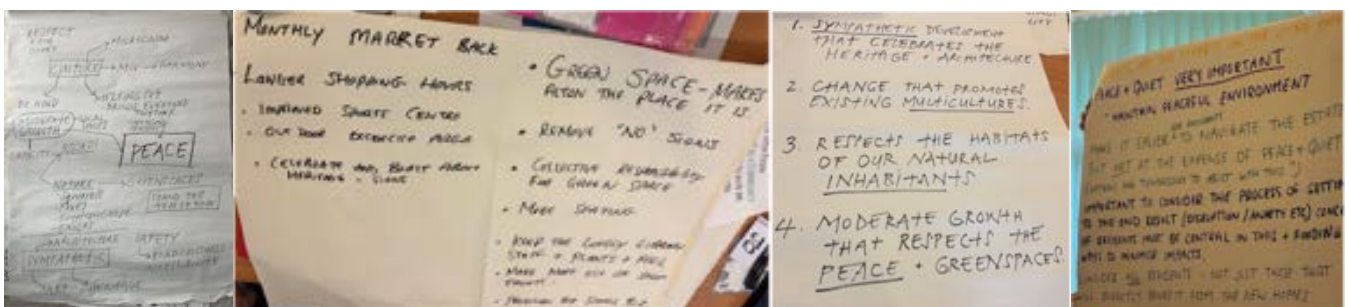
C. Creating a Statement of Identity for the Alton – guidance to inform all projects

The Panel worked in small groups to discuss their responses to the following: **Designers! Planners! Officers! Please understand, and pay attention to, the following about the Alton Estate as a PLACE and as a COMMUNITY when you come in to work on regeneration projects.**



Daisy has combined feedback from all into the points below. For now, these offer a **proposed draft Statement of Identity**, that could be used (i) as a tool to **brief anyone coming in to work on an ARP project** and (ii) as a **reference for the Panel when reviewing proposals** brought before them.

1. **Respect the Alton’s unique heritage and architecture.** Development should be moderate and sympathetic to this, and the estate’s history should be celebrated - boasted about! - with more visible recognition. **Suggestions:** *more signage and spatial storytelling; a film or media project to document and share the heritage.*
2. **Respect the presence of non-human residents.** The Alton’s natural inhabitants, such as its amazing birdlife, are an important part of its identity, and also bring pleasure to the community. As we plan new development, it’s essential to consider how to protect these species and avoid disrupting their habitats.
3. **Maintain the Alton’s peacefulness.** The estate is uniquely calm e.g. while making spaces easier for residents and others (e.g. delivery drivers) to navigate, may be desirable, that should not be at the expense of peace and quiet. **Suggestions:** *look at new technology options to improve navigation and wayfinding subtly and skilfully.*
4. **Understand that all the green space and planting make Alton the place it is.** Renewal should enhance this, by (i) including features that invite residents to pause, relax, and enjoy the green spaces across the changing seasons and (ii) encouraging collective responsibility for them. **Suggestions:** *remove the ‘No’ signs; seating.*
5. **The Alton is a multicultural place, with a strong community.** All residents need to be considered by the renewal, not just those who will benefit from new homes, and the whole community respected and celebrated. Shared spaces could work harder for residents, and support social interaction, wellbeing, safety and access. **Suggestions:** *make more of paved space near shops, cafes and community hubs, and of shopfronts; seating outside cafes; outdoor exercise areas; improved sports centre; provision of small businesses; monthly market back; longer shopping hours; “keep the lovely library staff”.*
6. **The Alton is a place where people already live.** This means – at least – two things:
 - Renewal will inevitably bring years of disruption, affecting people’s routines - and aspects of everyday life such as parking and school runs - and causing anxiety. These impacts need to be proactively minimised.
 - Residents are the experts in the ‘lived experience’ of the Alton. Their insights should therefore guide how disruption is managed, for *everyone* in the community. People who are not getting new homes will experience inconvenience without direct benefits, so it’s crucial that their voices are centred too.



D. Panel views on ballot communications imagery

The Panel were briefly asked at the end **which of three possible ways of representing the Alton** (*below*) – Historic, Present Day and/or Future Vision – they feel would be most appropriate to use on community-facing comms and publicity material in the lead-up to this year's **estate redevelopment ballot**.



There was not time to discuss this at length. However, the Panel shared some initial views and advice.

- **Too much English-language text** (e.g. *image on right*) **can be a barrier for some residents**. Material, and the process as a whole, needs to be inclusive and accessible to everyone in the community.
- **Older images can feel dated and disconnected** from the present.
- **The current future visuals, although engaging, can feel too busy and overwhelming**. They need to be clearer and more focused to help residents truly understand what's being proposed.
- **Could more than one timescale of images be used?** e.g. combining past and future images could work well.

ACTION: ARP Team to confirm how they will follow this conversation up with the Panel and/or wider residents. Including how a decision will be taken.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday 10 June, 4.00- 6.00pm.

ADVANCE TASK/S: see email from Jo. These have been revised since the meeting to ensure we make best use of your time, at meetings - as a 'collective brain', discussing ideas and opinions together, and in the lead-up to them.

ENDS