

Alton Community Panel Meeting Notes

Meeting 5 – 12 Aug 2025



Main aim of meeting: Drawing on previous Panel work to describe the identity of the Alton – what makes it unique as a place – **help HTA articulate the future character of three development sites within the Masterplan.**

Panel members: Sandra Claringbould, Charles Einloth, Amanuel Gebrekidan, Simone Johns, Orleen McIntosh, George Mills, Angus Robertson. *Numbers were low due to Summer holidays, and several members sent apologies.*

Others at meeting: Kate Batchelor (Programme Manager) and Jo Baxter (Community Engagement & Cultural Coordinator); Martha Hiles, Iain Sherman and Lucy Smith of architects HTA; Third-Party Chair Daisy Froud.

A. Follow up on Meeting 4 actions and other ARP Team and Chair updates.

- 1. Meeting programme 2025.** Members were happy with the proposed plan for core meetings, and for possible additional small sessions (voluntary but paid) for those interested in other topics, as well as the response to their suggestions for how to (a) make best use of time at meetings and (b) ensure Panel activity feels joined-up.
 - 2. Joining up with Our Roehampton (OR) work.** Angus suggested that (i) OR colleagues join the Jan '26 session on Community Grants to link in their work on local community 'infrastructure', and (ii) OR spatial needs research into where local groups might be based post redevelopment would ideally inform decisions about future community functions in the old library; we discussed a possible focused session on that building in 2026.
 - 3. December meeting.** Moved from 9 December to 2 December to avoid clashing with the Council's Area Panel.
 - 4. Ballot communications and information**

Panel members noted that letters from Civica Election Services about the ballot were already being sent to residents. By the next time we meet in September the ballot will be underway.

Engaging ballot information would be available at the Rockin' In The Rookery event on Bull Green on 16 August. The Council will also be holding an info stall every Friday on Danebury Parade, and carrying out door-knocking.
 - 5. Job opportunity:** Our Roehampton is recruiting for a part-time Project Co-ordinator for a Community Garden in Roehampton: <https://roehamptonvoicetrust.squarespace.com/jobs> Angus will share the ad to the whatsapp group. They would love a local person, maybe someone who is looking to get back into work. Applicants just need some experience managing projects; gardening skills can be grown on the job.
-

B. Shaping the 'look and feel' of development sites within the Alton Estate Renewal Masterplan

- 1. In August 2025, the Design Team are starting to think about the specific design of neighbourhoods and sites within the Masterplan.** This is post-ballot work: residents are voting on the principles and vision of the Masterplan. However, given the aim to build new homes quickly, work is being done in parallel with the ballot – in the hope of a Yes vote – to start to think in more detail.
- 2. Design is an evolving process,** with designs gradually developed over 2025-26. Sites that really matter to the Panel may be seen multiple times, each time with more detail added. A certain level of detail will be required for the planning application (overall shape, look and feel of buildings and spaces), and then even more will be added after that e.g. specifics of planting, or the look and feel of inside spaces. **Note:** Panel members stressed that looking at the layouts and interiors of housing blocks *will* be really important to them.
- 3. HTA's focus right now is on "fleshing out the Masterplan" creating visions or briefs for the character of individual sites.** These should all feel like they are "of the Alton" in terms of overall identity – drawing on work

such as the **Panel's Identity Brief** from Session 2 (right) – but can each have their own specific 'look and feel' that feels appropriate to what happens there, and to how residents think about and relate to that space.

4. **Iain stressed that resident input via the Panel at this stage is really valuable.** It allows a decision that initially might just be made by architects, and then *commented* on through community consultation, to be shaped upfront with residents in explicit ways. It also allows residents' deep knowledge of the Alton as a place, and as a place to *live*, to be respected and learned from.

5. **Three sites were up for discussion:** Portswood Place, 166 Roehampton Lane, and Danebury Neighbourhood.

6. **Panel question:** what plans are there, if any, for Albrook House? **A:** Albrook House will undergo a programme of major repairs, including new windows and a new roof.

7. **What we did?** Iain gave presentations on Masterplan background, Alton history and character, and the development sites. The Panel then worked in two groups to create 'mood boards' for the three sites, setting out aspirations for 'look and feel', as well as principles that they'd like followed, and areas where they'd like more detail or Panel activity in future.

8. **What happens next?** HTA will use Panel feedback to help work up concept briefs and designs for the sites. They will also share Panel feedback at wider community engagement to help prompt conversations.

FOUNDATIONAL DOC: **ALTON IDENTITY - DRAFT**

ANYONE COMING TO WORK ON ALTON RENEWAL IS ASKED TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

1. **Respect the Alton's unique heritage and architecture.** Development should be moderate and sympathetic to this, and the estate's history celebrated more visibly.

3. **Maintain the Alton's peacefulness.** The estate is uniquely calm. While it may be desirable to e.g. make spaces easier for residents and others to access and navigate that should not be at the expense of peace and quiet.

5. **The Alton is a multicultural place, with a strong community.** Renewal needs to consider all residents, not just those getting new homes, and the whole community respected and celebrated. Shared spaces could work harder for residents, supporting social interaction, wellbeing, safety and access.



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 bring pleasure to the community. It's essential to consider how to protect these species and avoid disrupting habitats.

4. **Understand that all the green spaces and planting make Alton the place it is.** Renewal should enhance this through (i) features that invite residents to pause, relax, and enjoy spaces across changing seasons and (ii) encouraging collective responsibility for them.

6. **The Alton is a place where people already live.** Disruption and anxiety over many years of renewal needs to be proactively minimised. With the insights of all residents – as experts in the 'lived experience' of the Alton – including those not benefiting from new homes, guiding how disruption is managed.

4



NEXT MEETING: Wednesday 10 September, 4.00- 6.00pm. This will be the first meeting where 'guest' officers and consultants bring their work to the Panel. We will focus on the Lighting Strategy, deciding which Recommendations for new lighting should be prioritised in coming months, with a particular focus on 'meanwhile' lighting in the renewal area, in order to ensure that spaces feel pleasant, safe and enjoyable after dark.

ENDS

ACP Character Brief for Portswood Place (draft)

A new building at **Portswood Place** will provide **essential community facilities**: nursery, surgery, family services, community space and shops.

A. How should this place look and feel?

1. **The building entrance is a really important aspect of the design.** It's the way in to several different spaces and services, including the GP.

- It needs to actively invite you in from the street, communicating *“this is MY family centre - I belong here”* through a combination of building design and practical signage/ “gateway markers”. Somewhere you might decide to pop into while passing by.
- It should feel warm and welcoming inside too – more a space to hang out than an institutional GP reception. Warm wood, soft materials and soft tones.
- Maybe there is a need for more than one entrance?

2. **The inside should offer spaces to enable community gathering and socialising** e.g. to sit and eat together, with a cafe – in the waiting area? - or kitchen. Complementing but not duplicating the Social Supermarket or Chantelle’s Community Kitchen. Possibly also **access to IT facilities and ‘easy’ co-working space.**

3. **Outside spaces should feel green and welcoming, and safe for children** – somewhere for family activity. (Currently lots of mums meet each other at 166 Roehampton Lane and then they want somewhere outside to spill into, relax, snack and play – but there isn’t anywhere.) **Private, safe play space** is needed too.

4. **The building shouldn’t feel too dominating over the green space opposite:** it should have a relationship to it that thinks carefully about how **connections and transitions between public and private, outside and inside, spaces** are designed e.g. design of views and sightlines between inside and outside. Ideally people will feel comfortable using and **gathering in that green space for activities like picnics.**

5. Inside and out, **colour is desirable.** It would be great to incorporate residents’ own artwork, like the mural.

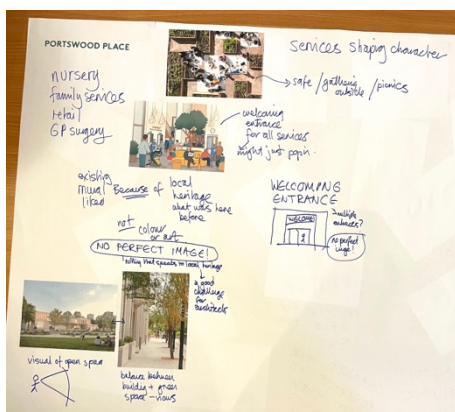


HTA slide

B. Challenges and questions for designers.

1. **Communicating heritage and connection through design:** The mural by Portswood Place is more than just ornament; it represents local heritage and people’s connections to place. We’d like to achieve something similar with the design of new buildings – how might the architects approach that?

2. Many of the inspiration images shared by HTA felt quite similar. At future sessions and in engagement it would be **good to see a range of case studies of people-centred public building** design that respond the feedback above, and that give a sense of what is possible.

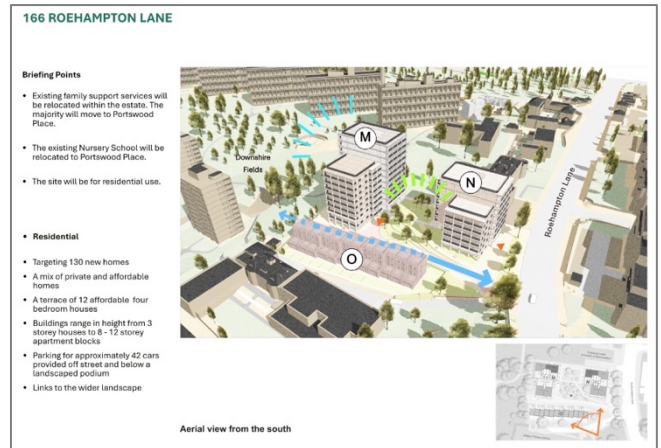


ACP Character Brief for 166 Roehampton Lane (draft)

166 Roehampton Lane will be designed as a **residential neighbourhood** with a mix of houses and flats surrounded by green space

A. How should this place look and feel?

- Different Panel members had different views on preferred architectural style. However, overall it should **strike a well-considered balance between past and present**. Ideally the design will evoke the Alton’s Modernist design heritage, but also speak to the future, feeling crisp and new.
- Materials should be of light and bright colours and tones.** Vibrant; not dark and dull. The pinkish-colour bricks in an example shared by HTA (New Avenue) were popular.
- Variation is important across building heights and forms, and in the way that building facades are designed.** This stops everything feeling too blocky, boring or same-ish. Pitched roofs in places work well, creating an impression of rows of homes, connecting to older “posher” Roehampton as well as to the Alton, and shift away from stereotypes and memories of low-quality social housing. Overall, we want to **avoid everything feeling too tall and compacted**; well-designed spaces between buildings will also help with that.
- As much as possible, **differentiation between blocks will be offered at the detailed level too** e.g. different designs for entrances and letter boxes, giving people ownership of front gardens. Character could be provided through features like **colourful bird boxes, supporting non-human life in the process**.



B. Challenges and questions for designers.

- Balcony design:** The Panel are keen to spend more time exploring options for balconies, and discussing pros and cons of different approaches. These are such important spaces for residents of flats. Generally there was preference for built-in balconies rather than ‘stuck-on’ ones, in terms of privacy, shade and shelter, but of course that does have an impact on the amount of internal space provided given that these ‘eat into’ the flat floorplan. But if they feel like really useful as extensions to rooms maybe that is fine...? **TO BE CONTINUED!**

