

Alton Community Panel Meeting Notes (draft)

Meeting 6 – 10 Sept 2025



Main aim of meeting: Help decide which Recommendations in the **Alton Outline Lighting Strategy** to prioritise.

Panel Members: Albert Balogun, Asma Choudhry, Charles Einloth, Simone Johns, Orleen McIntosh, George Mills, Angus Robertson.

Others at meeting: **From the Alton Renewal Team:** Kate Batchelor (Programme Manager), Jo Baxter (Community Engagement & Cultural Coordinator), Charlotte Rowlands (Project Assistant) and Anna Singleton (Head of Alton Regeneration). **From the High Streets Team:** Blanka Hay (Local Growth Manager – Policy and Strategy), along with consultant Luciana Martinez from lighting designers Light Follows Behaviour, authors of the Strategy. **From the Community Safety Team:** Leo Bunting (Community Safety Officer). Plus Third-Party Chair Daisy Froud.

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

- 1. Advance Reading.** This was the first meeting with significant advance reading, in response to Panel feedback, in order to maximise time for discussion at meetings. On reflection, we agreed there had been a bit too much! The Strategy is long and, as an A3 doc, hard to read on a phone. Downloading it was also complicated. **Action:** This feedback to be borne in mind for the next meeting. Ongoing Panel feedback will help find the right balance.
- 2. December meeting.** We confirmed that this has definitely been moved from 9 December to 2 December.
- 3. Additional session to look at how the Alton Renewal Plan is being evaluated with consultants Social Life:** Kate provisionally organised this optional session for interested Panel Members on Tues 30 Sept. **Action:** Jo to issue a poll to find the best date for interested Members. **Note:** this went ahead on 30 September.
- 4. Notes from Meeting 5:** these included draft **Character Briefs** for the design of three Masterplan sites. It's important that the Panel have the chance to comment on these. **Action:** to maximise time for discussing lighting, we agreed to postpone Panel feedback on the Briefs until **Meeting 7** on Block A, when HTA architect Iain will be there, and can provide an update on how they will now be applied.
- 5. Landscape Briefs:** The Panel's **Alton Identity Statement** (from **Meeting 2**) and **Village Green Brief (Meeting 3)** have now been feeding directly into the Brief to appoint a Landscape Architect for the Masterplan schemes. The ARP Team would like the Panel to have input to this ongoing process, including commenting on the draft Landscape Architect Brief if interested, and potentially also in the selection and appointment process.
- 6. Ballot FAQs:** a second version of these is now finalised, incorporating all Panel comments and feedback.

B. Session Activity: Prioritising Lighting Strategy Meanwhile Projects

Having completed the Strategy, the High Streets Team need to decide which Meanwhile Recommendations to take forward. These are all projects within the Housing Renewal area that can be quickly implemented to improve the environment while wider change takes place, then learned from to inform permanent improvements. The Team is focusing on the Meanwhile projects because they have direct budgetary control over these. They are liaising with other departments such as Housing and Highways about how other Recommendations can be addressed.

What did we do? Blanka and Luciana wanted Panel input, as resident experts, to decision-making. They asked the Panel, in small groups, to rank projects in priority order, with reasons for those rankings.

What happens next? The intention is to implement the Panel's decisions. If this can't happen in full, reasons will be communicated to the Panel.

See **Panel Meanwhile Lighting Priorities** (p.3) for the results. Amazingly, both small groups came to almost exactly the same conclusions, for the same reasons, so consensus was easily reached.



C. Panel Questions on the Lighting Strategy

- 1. What's the budget and where is it coming from?** It's from the ARP specific £5 million funding. For this first set of projects, there is about £50,000 or so, plus associated expenses. That should allow about three averagely priced projects from the list.
- 2. Why is the Roehampton Sport and Fitness Access project so expensive?** These are still early estimates and cover equipment/activity necessary to access high walls. It will be worth comparing prices down the line.
- 3. Are improvements to Alton Activity Centre going ahead?** Yes, also designed by Light Follow Behaviour, but as a separate project. The Centre will close for works from mid September until around April 2026.
- 4. What can be done about the unsafe, uneven ground by the stairs near the Family Hub?** Pedestrian improvements have already been agreed upon as a separate project, with surfacing as part of that.
- 5. Will pruning happen? Overgrown trees block lighting e.g. near the Family Hub.** Pruning could definitely help improve lighting impact. Some trees may also eventually outgrow the lighting. Pruning can be discussed in the Pedestrian Improvements session (**Meeting 8**). It has already been considered for Downshire Fields.
- 6. Will Nature be considered - it's important to think about the impacts on birds, bats, foxes etc?** The Strategy aims balance supporting wildlife with meeting community needs. Some parts of the estate aren't active all night, so can be darker after a certain time. This will however be looked at carefully on a neighbourhood basis.
- 7. Will the Meanwhile projects affect street lighting – this could be dangerous for drivers and pedestrians?** No, it will not affect existing streetlights or any vehicular routes.
- 8. How have projects been grouped into areas?** Current groupings are based on existing power infrastructure availability. As the redevelopment progresses, that infrastructure may evolve too.

D. Factors to consider when selecting which projects to prioritise – discussed as a whole group

- 1. Value for Money:** ensuring proposals are cost-effective and deliver meaningful impact for the money.
- 2. Ambience:** creating spaces that feel open, welcoming, and friendly, encouraging community use and comfort.
- 3. High-Priority Areas:** focus on locations that are currently darker or have poor visibility, especially where people frequently walk or gather.
- 4. Safety:** prioritise areas with a history of crime or antisocial behaviour, where improved lighting could enhance safety and deter incidents.
- 5. Budget Limitations:** recognise that the budget is not unlimited.



NEXT MEETING: Tuesday 14 October, 4.00- 6.00pm. This will focus on Block A.




Note: the initial plan was to look at current Block A design proposals, following feedback from the Council's Design Review Panel about aspects that would benefit from discussion. However, the project programme has since changed, and we don't yet have that feedback.

A Block A design-focused session can still take place at a later date. For now, the focus of **Meeting 7** will be on something called a Health Impact Assessment that is being prepared from Block A. If time allows, and the Panel are interested, we can still discuss how the task of naming Block A might be approached.

ENDS

Panel Meanwhile Lighting Priorities (draft)

Projects are listed in priority order below. The Panel found it easy to reach consensus on the Top 3, and had only slight differences of opinion re. the others.

Priority	Project	Reasons	Other considerations
#1	Estate Access from Family Hub and Roehampton Lane (£15k) 	<p>An important route in and out of the estate connecting key facilities, and offering access to bus stops, hospital etc. that should be safe to use.</p> <p>Lighting would enable kids to walk to school. At 4pm in November it already dark.</p>	
#2	Roehampton Library combined with Home Is Where The Heart Is Community Artwork (£20k; the cheaper Library option) 	<p>A nice intro to the estate would increase sense of pride.</p> <p>It's not a priority to light the Library sign, and shopfront uniformity doesn't feel important.</p> <p>But it IS important to light the route from the back of the library to Roehampton Lane. The stairs there can feel uncomfortable.</p> <p>This could partly be done through lighting the new mural and the trees, which is why the Panel combined these projects.</p> <p>Playful elements in trees are nice, but would be better close to the library, rather than on the other side.</p>	<p>This should be designed to have a good ambiance – blinging up the trees but not too much and not tacky – needs to feel respectful. Fine to have Xmas lights at Xmas but not year round.</p> <p>NB. The bus stop and the library feel important and are part of the entry.</p> <p>LFB observed: the idea of combining and adapting these can definitely be explored. But it's important to be clear that if there's desire to light both the gateway to the estate and the area behind the library, budget limitations may mean we can't light everything equally.</p>
#3	Portswood Place (£16k) 	<p>It's a key venue with the church and the bus stops.</p> <p>Good to light the mural and to improve the lighting at the front of the shops (including when closed).</p> <p>It's important to have routes for shop users and local residents in the dark. How people get to and from Portswood Place safely is a priority.</p>	<p>Could there be sensors?</p> <p>Not in favour of the car park element (1 group).</p> <p>Furniture etc. not a priority (1 group).</p>
#4 + #5	Harbridge Avenue and Danebury Play Space Danebury Avenue	<p>Could be a nice space to use. Would be good to have wall lighting while the Alton Activity Centre is closed to encourage more play use.</p> <p>Road lighting is not too bad here; you could simply just light the signs on the buildings.</p>	<p>It does seem expensive – is it good value? Where could meanwhile lights here then be re-used?</p> <p>Concerns that proposed lighting could potentially encourage vandalism.</p> <p>Eco-considerations. Good spot for safety.</p>
#6	Roehampton Sports and Fitness Access	<p>Existing light here seems sufficient (if not ideal).</p> <p>Too expensive for Meanwhile.</p>	<p>The stairs by Allbrook should be addressed.</p>

