

Alton Community Panel Meeting Notes (draft) Meeting 7 – 14 October 2025



Main aim of meeting: Identify health priorities to inform a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) for Block A.

Panel Members: Albert Balogun, Asma Choudhry, Sandra Claringbould, Amanuel Gebrekidan, Nusrat Mahmood, Orleen McIntosh, George Mills, Jo Playford, Angus Robertson.

Others at meeting: **From the Alton Renewal Team:** Kate Batchelor (Programme Manager), Jo Baxter (Community Engagement & Cultural Coordinator), Antonia De Lima (Senior Project Officer), Charlotte Rowlands (Project Assistant). **From the Public Health Team:** Javed Rahman (Public Health Lead – Healthy Places) plus consultant Prudence Wales (Stantec). **From architects HTA:** Iain Sherman and Lucy Smith of architects HTA.

Third-Party Chair Daisy Froud was not able to attend this meeting.

A. Follow up on Meeting 6 actions and other ARP Team and Chair updates.

- Notes from Meeting 6 (Lighting Strategy Priorities).** While some Panel Members were happy with these as a record of discussions and decisions, some had not received them. **Action:** Jo to resend.
- Follow up from Meeting 5 (Character Briefs for Masterplan sites).** Iain updated the Panel that design work on these sites would continue after the ballot, if residents vote Yes. This will be the opportunity to start to respond to the Panel’s work on ‘look and feel’ as detail of the designs agreed at ballot are developed.
- Ballot update:** the ballot closes at 5.00pm on Thursday 16 October. Results, held by Civica, will be released the next day. Communications are being prepared for both outcomes. If the result is a Yes vote, Panel Members were invited to join a gathering by the hoarding on Friday 17 October at 4.00pm. **Note:** it was a Yes Vote!

B. Main Session Activity: Prioritising Health Impacts to be considered in the design of Block A

As part of drafting a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) for Block A, the Council believes it is vital to include resident perspectives to ensure recommendations made are relevant and can help address health disparities on the Alton. An HIA is a requirement for major developments and will be submitted with the planning application. Its goal is to minimise any negative health impacts and promote wellbeing through thoughtful development.

The Council acknowledged that the Block A HIA is happening later than usual. Typically, they are done at the start of a process, but it is still valuable at this stage: (i) internal layouts can be influenced, (ii) it can help the Design Team review and sense-check the overall designs and (iii) it will inform thinking about the HIA needed for the overall Masterplan well in advance.

What did we do? Following a briefing, the Panel worked in groups to first consider (i) **what currently makes it easy for Alton residents to stay healthy, and what makes it harder**, and (ii) **what kind of changes are desirable**. They then **reviewed and ranked a set of health themes/ criteria** that can be considered by the HIA.

What happens next? Panel priorities will (i) **directly impact how criteria for assessment are weighted in the final HIA**, and (ii) **directly influence Recommendations made in the HIA re. actions and mitigations**. The Public Health and Renewal Teams can then track HIA influence on health outcomes with the Panel and others.

See [Panel Health Priorities](#) (p.3) for the Panel’s recommendations.



C. Panel Questions on the Health Impact Assessment

1. **Where is the health data being used for the HIA sourced from?** The 2021 Census.
2. **Will there be an HIA for the wider Masterplan?** Yes. While the current HIA focuses on Block A, a separate HIA for the Masterplan will be submitted with its planning application, expected towards the end of 2026. Panel feedback from this session will also feed into the early stages of that.
3. **Can the HIA assess both pre- and post-construction impacts?** Yes, both. The construction phase itself is also important e.g. noise and air quality, and can be considered in today's activity.

D. Secondary Session Activity: Update on Block A designs

Iain shared current design proposals, followed by a few questions from the Panel. **Action:** given the initial Plan, as per the [Panel's co-created Programme of Meetings](#) was for this session to focus on Block A designs, the Panel are asked to send through thoughts and questions on Block A that they would like addressed. Plans for Block A can then be picked up in more detail at a future session. See [Homework](#) below.

Initial Panel Questions

1. **Now that there are plans to include a GP surgery, will the building increase in size?** The footprint of Block A has been increased to accommodate the surgery, but a storey has also been removed. The building is now planned as four storeys rather than five.
2. **Will there be office spaces in the building?** Yes, but for council use, not private commercial use.
3. **Will there be bookable spaces?** Options for these are currently being explored.
4. **Will there be a café?** A café could be considered, but there is not currently one in the plans.
5. **Will noise from the youth space affect the library?** The building will be designed to minimise noise transfer. Measures such as double glazing, insulation, and careful timetabling will be used to manage sound levels.



NEXT MEETING: Tuesday 11 November, 4.00- 6.00pm. This will focus on Pedestrian Movement Improvements as planned. See [Meeting 8 Briefing](#).

Homework: Please send through any thoughts and questions on the Block A designs. These will be discussed at a future session.

ENDS

Panel Health Impact Priorities relevant to Block A

Defining a healthy neighbourhood: in the Panel’s view, what currently helps people on the Alton stay healthy, and what makes it harder?

| Positive aspects of the Alton now | Current challenges on the Alton | What would help people be healthier? |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to green spaces and parks Free gym facilities and free yoga Coffee mornings and social spaces Walkability across the estate Late-opening shops Clean air Food support Local pharmacy and GP services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High heating costs, poor insulation Early gym closure Lack of youth clubs and evening activities Limited <i>inclusive</i> social spaces Inconsistent rubbish collection Limited access to affordable fresh food Dog fouling Poor transport links No secondary school on the estate Lack of mental health services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to healthy food Improved air quality Affordable bike hire for children Better shops with healthy options Larger library Improved transport Dedicated mens’ clubs Pavement resurfacing Larger, warmer homes More blood donation facilities |

Panel priorities for health themes covered by the Block A Health Impact Assessment (HIA).

This exercise was carried out with reference to the table (right).

Healthy Housing (Item 1 on the table) was the most critical issue for both groups, ranked above Connected To Communities, Healthy Environment and Vibrant Neighbourhoods.

See Page 4 for a summary of detailed feedback.

| Theme | HIA Determinant | Health and Wellbeing Links | How important is this to You? | Would there be any population groups who are more or less affected | Any other comments |
|-----------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------|--|--------------------|
| 1. Healthy housing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing design & affordability Minimise the use of resources Climate Change | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of living space - overcrowding Unhealthy living environment – daylight, ventilation, noise Excess deaths due to cold / overheating injuries in the home Excess summer deaths due to overheating | | e.g. older residents, children & young people, parents & carers, disabled or mobility impaired residents, working residents? | |
| 2. Connected to Communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessibility and Active Travel | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical inactivity, cardiovascular disease and obesity Road and traffic injuries Mental illness from social isolation Noise and air pollution from traffic Able to access employment opportunities | | | |
| 3. Healthy environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to Open Space and Nature Air Quality, Noise and Neighborhood Amenity Access to Healthy Foods | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disturbance and stress caused by construction activity Mental health benefits from access to nature and green space and water Opportunities for active lifestyles, healthy diet and tackling food poverty | | | |
| 4. Vibrant neighbourhoods | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to healthcare and social care services and other social infrastructure Crime reduction and community safety Social cohesion and inclusive design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to services and health inequalities Ill health exacerbated through isolation, lack of social contact and fear of crime | | | |

The Panel also stressed potential health impacts of the construction process, emphasising the importance of **regular, consistent and transparent communication about these impacts**, such as traffic disruption or changes to air quality. These can be particularly noticeable somewhere like the Alton – a relatively quiet place compared to inner city areas. Residents need to understand what to expect and feel informed throughout. It’s also important that impacts are not allowed to get worse during busy periods.

HOW and WHY would the Panel prioritise the health themes/criteria covered by the Block A HIA?

| Rank | GROUP 1 | | GROUP 2 | |
|------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|--|
| | Theme | Reasons | Theme | Reasons |
| #1 | Healthy Housing | Current challenges to be addressed include lack of lifts, poor housing conditions, and overcrowding. Planned housing improvements are expected to address these issues. | Healthy Housing | Better insulation and reduced costs. |
| #2 | Vibrant Neighbourhoods | Current limited access to mental health services. Youth clubs on the Alton have closed. Current perceptions of antisocial behaviour and safety concerns. Current lack of inclusive social spaces and activities, contributing to loneliness and reduced community engagement. | Healthy Environment | Construction-related stress, including noise and dust, can negatively affect mental health across all age groups and impact local wildlife. |
| #3 | Connected to Communities | Transport difficulties currently make it hard for residents to get home. | Vibrant Neighbourhoods | Can help reduce isolation, especially for younger people. |
| #4 | Healthy Environment | The estate currently benefits from good access to open spaces, which supports physical and mental wellbeing. | Connected to Communities | While the estate has strong community ties, transport challenges disproportionately impact secondary school students, who travel long distances. |

Overall reflections from Stantec (HIA consultants) and HTA

1. **The Panel's emphasis on the impacts of construction on mental health** is a valid and valuable point.
2. **The importance of housing quality, preserving and enhancing green space, and creating inclusive social spaces for community connection** are all important existing considerations for the Masterplan, now given further emphasis, including through a health lens, by this Panel feedback.
3. **Both felt that the session had added valuable depth to existing data.**

ENDS