

# Alton Community Panel Meeting Notes (draft)

## Meeting 9 – 2 December 2025



**Main aim of meeting:** Getting up to date on plans for Block A and setting priorities for future Block A engagement.

**Panel Members:** Albert Balogun, Asma Choudhry, Sandra Claringbould, Tatiana Dobрева, Charles Einloth, Simone Johns, Nusrat Mahmood, Orleen Mcintosh, George Mills, Jane Pavitt, Angus Robertson.

**Others at meeting: Alton Renewal Team:** Kate Batchelor (Programme Manager), Charlotte Rowlands (Project Assistant) and Anna Singleton (Head of Alton Regeneration). **Architects HTA:** Iain Sherman and Lucy Smith.

**Third-Party Chair:** Daisy Froud.

### A. Follow up on Meeting 8 actions and other ARP Team and Chair updates.

- Meeting 8 Notes:** all Panel Members present felt that these were an accurate summary of the meeting and of priorities for Pedestrian Improvements to routes and access on the Alton.
- Celebration lunch and field trip:** the proposed time on 16 January did not work for several Panel Members due to regular Friday commitments and school pick-ups. **Action:** Jo to poll Members re. other possible Jan dates.
- Panel evaluation session:** this will be the focus of January’s meeting. Led by independent consultants, we will look back at the initial 9 month ‘trial’ period of the Panel and reflect on next steps, while also having an opportunity to learn more about co-production principles (in response to previous Panel requests for ‘training’ on this subject). **Action:** ARP Team to confirm date for this before everyone breaks for Christmas holidays.
- Jo absent:** Jo sent her apologies, due to ongoing injury. We noted with thanks that she had still managed to ensure that the meeting room was decorated for the festive season and that festive snacks were provided.
- Agendas for 2026:** to be decided in early 2026. One learning from 2025 is not to have too fixed and linear and agenda, as circumstances inevitably change. Instead a strategy might be to agree a pool of priority topics with the Panel that can be brought forward as they reach a meaningful point for discussion.

### B. Main Session Activity #1: Update on Block A

Anna, Iain and Lucy presented on Block A – *slides are shared with these Notes*. This covered, in response to Panel requests, (i) project **background and history**, including how plans evolved to the current point, (ii) **current proposals**, as the Team gets ready to submit a planning application, and (iii) **engagement so far, as well as possible areas for future engagement**, with the Panel and with the wider Alton community.

**The Team aims to submit the planning application by end 2025. Action:** They will share a link to the online **Planning Portal**, highlighting relevant documents.

After submission there is a 28-day consultation period during which anyone can submit comments, in support or against. While negative feedback does not automatically overturn an application, it is considered by councillors as part of the decision-making process.



#### Questions from Panel asked on the night

<p><b>1. Was anything lost from the original designs to accommodate the GP surgery in the Hub?</b></p>	<p>No. The site of the <i>existing</i> practice building in fact provided additional land for development, so the building design has been adjusted from a smaller ‘footprint’ with 5 storeys to a larger one with a reduced height of 4 storeys.</p>
<p><b>2. Will there be one surgery or a mixture of practices?</b></p>	<p>The plan is to include the established Alton Practice. With better resources they can deliver improved services.</p>

<p><b>3. Will there be public space all around the Community Hub?</b></p>	<p>No, only on 3 sides. The GP surgery will have restricted, dedicated parking, which means the back of the building (the East side) is a controlled zone.</p>
<p><b>4. How will heating and cooling be managed, especially for the library, given the large amount of glass?</b></p> <p><i>Observation from a Panel Member who works in the library: it's vital to talk to on-the-ground staff, who experience the daily reality of spaces, as well as those at senior/managerial level; you will get different responses.</i></p>	<p>Glazing will mainly face east and west. Combined with projections and 'fins' on the glass to offer shading, this will reduce heat gain and glare from direct sunlight. Detailed 'thermal modelling' studies will ensure the building does not overheat. Additionally, windows that people can open themselves will offer the option of natural ventilation. Library shelving will be towards the centre of the library to minimise books being exposed to sunlight damage. <b>Note:</b> A detailed design session with Library Services staff will take place in 2026.</p> <p><i>HTA agreed, saying that what might work well is a combined session with the Panel and on-the-ground staff.</i></p>
<p><b>5. What's the logic for the look of the Hub building windows?</b></p> <p><i>Panel observation: The proposed grid pattern of windows across the facades feels a bit out of character.</i></p>	<p>Windows are designed to feel domestic in scale, thinking about how the building is experienced on the inside, and making it straightforward to adapt over time. The style aims to be simple and 'timeless', but with the arch features at the top reflecting the local area's existing architectural character.</p>
<p><b>6. Will the upper-level terrace on the Hub be for public use?</b></p>	<p>Yes, generally it will be. However, there may be restrictions after hours for security and operational reasons.</p>
<p><b>7. How will noise from the terrace be managed?</b> It could cause disturbance for the flats opposite.</p>	<p>HTA is considering noise impacts in the design process, and detailed acoustic studies can be carried out at the next stage, with feedback shared with the Panel, to ensure impacts are minimal. (Other Panel Members suggested that traffic noise from Roehampton Lane may mask any terrace noise anyway.)</p>
<p><b>8. How will public access to the Hub be managed?</b></p>	<p>The building will have open public access during standard hours. Access outside those is currently being discussed. Measures being considered include: a system for booking spaces, access control systems (e.g. fobs), a building facilities manager to manage public access after-hours.</p>
<p><b>9. Why is the library at ground level; it might feel safer for children and offer other advantages higher up?</b></p>	<p>Extensive workshop feedback from Library Services stressed the library should be at ground level. This ensures children's areas are accessible, both practically for buggies/prams and for general ease of access and recognises that people are generally less inclined to travel upstairs for library services.</p>
<p><b>10. In terms of youth space, is there potential for offering The Base more than they have already?</b></p>	<p>The proposals offer The Base a dedicated area about twice the area of its current one. There are also multiple other spaces within the building that can be used for youth activities. The Council will manage this in an ongoing way.</p>
<p><b>11. What have been the main trends from engagement so far?</b></p>	<p><b>(a) Successful formats:</b> group activities such as coffee mornings have been effective, with strong participation and valuable input. <b>(b) Repetition matters:</b> The more frequently the Team meet people, the more trust and insight they gain e.g. ongoing work with the Youth Advisory Panel has had tangible impact.</p>

**Additional questions from the Panel – shared before and after the meeting**

**Action:** HTA and the ARP Team to provide answers to these ahead of the January meeting.

**12. What is the rationale for a separate private garden for the Housing block?** No other similar blocks on the estate have their own private garden so why this one?

**13. Why not use the space available (next to the housing) to make the proposed play area larger?** This would then be available for everyone in the heart of the estate.

**14.** The Panel, based on experience, previously expressed preferences for recessed or covered balconies, given the English climate. Yet in this scheme, **the top flat balconies have no shelter at all. What's the rationale for that?**

**15. There was no mention of spaces for pensioners in the Hub.** Is that because there are seen to be enough other spaces meeting their needs elsewhere on the Alton, or is that something that needs to be picked up?

### C. Main Session Activity #2: Future Engagement on Block A

**HTA will be preparing an engagement strategy for 2026, covering the next stage of design work.** This will include sessions with key stakeholders (e.g., library staff) who interact with the community daily.

To inform this, the Panel worked in three groups to discuss two questions: Which aspects of the Block A plans is it most important that: **(i) they get to see and discuss, as a Panel?** And **(ii) the wider Alton community is meaningfully involved in?**

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**NEXT MEETING: Date in January TBC.** To be focused on evaluation of the Panel so far, and discussion of next steps for the Panel in 2026.

*ENDS*

# Panel Priorities for Block A discussion and engagement in 2026 (draft)

## 1. Priorities for Panel Discussion

Priority	GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C
1	Operational Plan	Community Hall Operational Plan Communal Spaces	Operational Plan
2	Community Hall		Communal Spaces Community Hall Public Realm
3	Library spaces		
4	Youth spaces		
5	Communal spaces	Public Realm	Library spaces Youth Spaces
6	Public Realm	Youth Spaces Library Spaces	Naming and Identity
7	Naming + identity		

Where items are grouped above the Panel wonder whether a combined session could be held.



## 2. Priorities for Wider Community Engagement

Priority	GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C
1	Library Spaces	Naming + Identity	The group discussed this – captured in (3.) below - but did not formally rank topics.
2	Community Hall	Library Spaces Youth Spaces	
3	Youth Spaces		
4	Communal Spaces	Community Hall Communal Spaces Operational Plan Public Realm	
5	Operational Plan		
6	Public Realm		
7	Naming + Identity		



## 3. Reasons for opinions above

Decision Area	Relevance to Panel	Relevance to Wider Community
<b>Operational Plan</b> Entrance, circulation, how the building works and is run.	<b>Very important because:</b> as the Panel, having had “a peep behind the curtain’ you become invested, and have the time/space/ knowledge to understand and help ensure that this building will operate well for ALL its different users in terms of things like timetabling and safety.  <b>Note:</b> You can have a beautiful building, but without good management it can still ‘fail’. People need to know how to book spaces (not always straightforward on the Alton - maybe something for wider review), and management (bookings, budgets, staffing) is joined up.	<b>Still important</b> for the wider community to be consulted on, <b>even if not a top priority.</b>  <b>Idea:</b> great to work with people to think about ‘playing out’ a week of the Hub <i>in use</i> . Imagining how spaces might be used and then working through the implications.
<b>Community Hall</b> Hall, roof terrace and bookable spaces	<b>Important and relevant to the Panel</b> because these are key publicly used spaces where oversight and influence will be valuable. The Panel is potentially in a good position to think through the bigger picture and logic of this.	<b>Very important because:</b> this is somewhere that everyone in the community will potentially use and be impacted by.

Decision Area	Relevance to Panel	Relevance to Wider Community
<p><b>Communal Spaces</b> Corridors, entrances, lift lobbies, stairs</p>	<p><b>Important and relevant to the Panel</b> because these are key publicly used spaces where community oversight and influence will be valuable. The Panel is potentially in a good position to think through the bigger picture and logic of this.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Toilets are also important to consider.</p>	<p><b>Still important</b> for the wider community to be consulted on, <b>even if not a top priority.</b></p>
<p><b>Public Realm</b></p>	<p><b>Important to the Panel</b> because these are key publicly used spaces where community oversight and influence will be valuable.</p> <p><b>Less important than other topics because:</b> there are going to be other play areas on the Alton; not everything is dependent on this one.</p>	<p><b>Less important because:</b> there are going to be other play areas on the Alton; not everything is dependent on this one.</p> <p>Nonetheless <b>still important</b> for the wider community to be consulted on. And need to use straightforward language to do so (paved areas, green space), not professional jargon.</p>
<p><b>Library Spaces</b> Adult &amp; Children</p>	<p><b>Important because:</b> ensuring that the space is safe for children is a priority.</p> <p><b>An appropriate role for the Panel</b> might be to review plans as they come forward against priorities and feedback gathered from wider, and targeted, engagement i.e. a scrutiny/ review role rather than a co-design one.</p> <p><b>Less important because:</b> those with specialist knowledge in Library Services are possibly better suited to inform decisions.</p>	<p><b>Very important because:</b> somewhere that everyone in the community will potentially use and be impacted by. The children's library is particularly important.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Important to work with not just current users but also potential users i.e. targeted and wider engagement</p>
<p><b>Youth Spaces</b></p>	<p><b>Less important because:</b> those with specialist knowledge in Youth Services are possibly better suited to inform decisions.</p> <p><b>An appropriate role for the Panel</b> might be to review plans as they come forward against priorities and feedback gathered from wider, and targeted, engagement i.e. a scrutiny/ review role rather than a co-design one.</p>	<p><b>Very important because:</b> somewhere that everyone in the community or someone in their household or family will potentially use and be impacted by. Plus, the specific groups who use it will be the most important voices to feed in.</p> <p><b>But important that</b> young people are able to shape and use the whole building, not just the youth space.</p>
<p><b>Naming &amp; Identity</b></p>	<p><b>Relevance to the Panel:</b> the strategy of naming it; not so much deciding the name, which is more of a wider community task.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Maybe this is something that gets decided later in the process i.e. once the community have been part of all the other conversations, the naming and identity may have started to take a certain direction through that i.e. people will know that they are naming?</p>	<p><b>Very important because:</b> the public having a major say helps create ownership of and shared identity for the building. Helps it feel that this is the <i>community's</i> building. And there is only one real chance to do it.</p>