

Alton

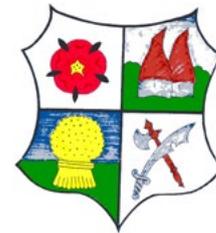


Neighbourhood Development Plan 2011 to 2028 As modified April 2021

ALTON TOWN MAYOR

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Dear Fellow Altonians,

It is my honour to write this introduction to the updated version of the Alton Neighbourhood Plan. The previous version was adopted in a referendum in 2016 by a massive majority of Altonians. Since then its policies have benefitted us by giving us an increased influence on the decisions that affect the development of our town. However development and planning do not stand still and we are required to keep it up to date if it is to continue to “carry weight” in planning decisions. In particular, the government requires us to maintain an adequate supply of land for new housing. Alton Town Council thoroughly considered the options regarding the Neighbourhood Plan. East Hampshire District Council is working on a new Local Plan that will, amongst other issues, address how the longer-term housing needs of the area are to be met. The government has said that it plans to make major changes to the planning process, including the role of Neighbourhood Plans. In the light of these two factors, your council did not feel it was appropriate to produce a completely new plan at this time. The policies and aspirations in the existing plan remain relevant and are ongoing. Instead we resolved to update the housing supply policies to reflect the changes that have occurred since the plan was adopted. These result from the two town centre sites that have become redundant from their former use, and the development that has been completed on the newer housing sites. This new updated version of our Neighbourhood Plan will allow us to retain a say in the future of our town and to resist unwanted speculative development.

Despite the limited scope of the modifications, the production of this plan has required a substantial amount of work from several people, most of whom have been working in a voluntary capacity. They are acknowledged at the end of this document. I would like to thank everyone for their tireless and public-spirited work. I would also like to thank everyone who has responded to our public consultation. Your comments have been noted and your support has enabled us to move forward in the confidence that this Plan reflects the desires of most Altonians.

Yours sincerely
Councillor Graham Titterington



Foreword

This Neighbourhood Development Plan has been written in response to a requirement for Alton to accept significant development over the years 2011 to 2028. It is a natural progression from the *Alton 2020* Town Plan published in 2005 and other follow on work such as the *Town Design Statement*, all of which demanded significant amounts of public consultation and feedback. The response from the public for this plan has been excellent and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) has worked hard to capture all feedback as evidence to support legally enforceable policies in the Plan.

Altonians really care about their town and want it to retain its charm, character and setting into the future whilst accepting that development must happen. *Alton 2020* recognised that Alton needed to grow to become more sustainable. I believe that this Plan, where sometimes hard decisions have had to be taken, has ensured that Altonians continue to play a significant part in how the town evolves into the future. I thank the NPSG who have, on a voluntary basis, given up significant amounts of their spare time to pursue implementation of this Plan over a period of almost 24 months and the public for their support.

2021 : I am delighted with the continued utility of this Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) since its endorsement and publication in 2016. Alton Town Council (ATC) and East Hants District Council (EHDC) have embraced the Policies and Action Points to the benefit of the town and its surrounding settlements. Inevitably plans go out of date as they age and updates are required, this being the situation ATC finds itself in with this NDP. So I commend them for taking the initiative to carry out work to produce the modified Plan as an interim measure, this being before a full review of the NDP after a new EHDC Local Plan is published. A lot of work has been undertaken by the modified ANP Steering Group, Councillors and Officers, with considerable support from EHDC. The public have been formally consulted and their opinions listened to on all changes. The demand for development to meet Government quotas is therefore being met, to ensure the best possible outcome for the town and its evolution.



Mike Heelis MBE, Chair of the Alton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

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1. Introduction

This Neighbourhood Development Plan has been created by Alton Town Council in Hampshire in order to shape the town's growth up to 2028. It has been written to become a part of East Hampshire District Council's (EHDC's) statutory Development Plan (the plan for the whole district) and it sets out a range of non-strategic policies which will guide planning decisions made by the local planning authority in respect of Alton. It therefore covers the same period of time as the statutory Development Plan, which is 2011 to 2028.

The Neighbourhood Development Plan makes use of powers that were brought about by the Localism Act 2011 and its subsequent regulations. They name town and parish councils as 'qualifying bodies' which may produce a Plan for their area. The intention is to ensure that Alton residents have a greater say than they otherwise would have in the way that the area grows and changes. There is a desire to see development which reflects the needs of local people and brings benefit to the town.

This document therefore takes heed of local people's views, as expressed through various means of consultation and engagement, as well as taking account of evidence about needs, existing policies in the *East Hampshire Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy*, and the *National Planning Policy Framework*, with its emphasis on sustainable development (the latter including its sister document, the *National Planning Practice Guidance*).

The remainder of this document:

- Provides information about the local planning context;
- Gives an overview of Alton;
- Outlines the Plan's scope and objectives;
- Sets out each of the Plan policies and linked action points;
- Comments on future monitoring and implementation work.

The modification process has sought to review and update the residential allocations. The site allocation process was agreed with EHDC and is summarised as follows:

- Identify sites within the Neighbourhood Plan Designated Area through EHDC, from latest land availability assessment (LAA, December 2018) and sites subsequently promoted or identified through the emerging Local Plan process
- Undertake an initial short-listing of sites to discount those which are promoted for non-residential uses or which lie outside the Settlement Boundary Policy or which are not made available for the Neighbourhood Plan review
- Subject the ten shortlisted LAA sites at Alton to preference criteria including:
 - Consistency with Neighbourhood Plan policies and objectives
 - Environmental and Heritage constraints
 - Other site constraints e.g. contamination / noise / topography / access
 - Planning history
- Review the existing Neighbourhood Plan allocation sites to determine if a change is required to the allocation.

2. Local planning context

East Hampshire Local Plan Joint Core Strategy

The *Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy* was produced by EHDC and the South Downs National Park Authority. The document, which sets out its policies, was formally adopted in May and June 2014 following its successful examination in public. Therefore an up to date Local Plan with strategic policies covering Alton is in existence.

In total there is an expectation that 1,731 new dwellings will be built at Alton between 2011 and 2028. 1,031 of these already have planning permission to be built or are on sites that were previously allocated for development or are expected windfall sites.

The *Joint Core Strategy* (2014) cites Alton as a location which is relatively well suited to take sustainable development (policy CP2). It makes a housing allocation of 700 (minimum) new dwellings at Alton over the period from 2011 to 2028 (policy CP10). The examination of that Strategy noted a shortage of available brownfield sites within the built up area and that development would therefore probably be on edge of town greenfield sites.

1,731 dwellings represents a major expansion of the town. In 2013 an *Alton Study* was conducted by consultants commissioned by EHDC. It took a long-term view of the town, beyond this plan period, and concluded that this level of development could be sustainable if local constraints were managed.

This Neighbourhood Development Plan includes allocations already made by EHDC, and identifies appropriate allocation sites for the 700 (minimum) new dwellings, all of them being sites which have come forward as a result of the District Council's *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment* (SHLAA) process.

This process:

- Called for available development sites, the most recent call being that run in summer 2014;
- Undertook an initial short listing of the available sites to discount those which were clearly inappropriate e.g. unsustainable;
- Subjected the thirteen shortlisted SHLAA sites at Alton to a full Sustainability Assessment, this being conducted by external consultants to consider their environmental, social and economic pros and cons on a comparable basis.

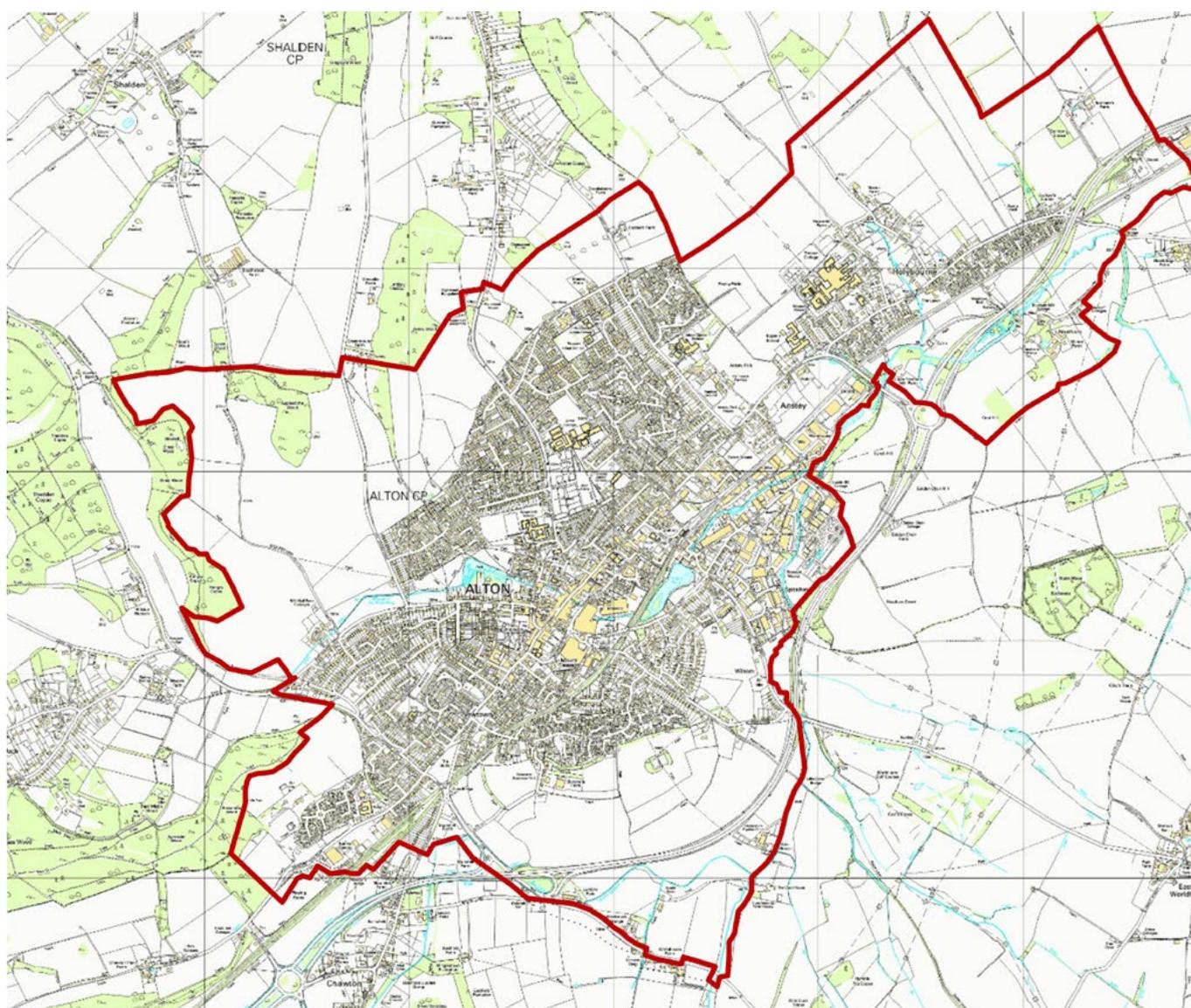
That formed a key input to the Neighbourhood Development Plan, which considered the thirteen SHLAA sites. Further relevant evidence about sites was contained in the *Landscape Capacity Study* which was published by the District Council in 2013. However, where applicable, the number of likely dwellings shown for each site is based on the latest planning decisions available.

Hampshire County Council, as the Local Highways Authority with financial support from the District Council, has been undertaking an *Alton Strategic Transport Study* (published in June 2015), which was instigated as a result of the town's Neighbourhood Development Plan work. This has been considering strategic transport needs, given the expected overall housing growth, as well as providing additional evidence in the form of traffic counts and forecasts for potential development sites and new highway infrastructure.

2. Local planning context

Designated area

The designated Neighbourhood Development Plan area is all of the Town Council area except for a small strip of uninhabited farm land at the southern tip, which falls within the South Downs National Park. This designation was formally agreed by the local planning authority (EHDC) on 8th May 2014 in line with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.



Designated Area of Alton Neighbourhood Development Plan

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3. Plan development

In line with legislative requirements, the Neighbourhood Plan was supported by the submission of the following documents:

- A Basic Conditions Statement, showing how the Plan met the necessary legal requirements; and
- A Consultation Statement, summarising the engagement with residents, businesses and stakeholders, and how their input was used. Throughout the process considerable emphasis was placed on reaching local people, listening to their views and testing out proposals with them.

This Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in accordance with all relevant primary and secondary legislation, which is principally Schedule 4B of the *Town and Country Planning Act 1990*, as amended by the *Localism Act 2011*, and the *Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012* (as later amended). This ensures that the plan policies meet the 'basic conditions'.

In accordance with the legislation, in February 2021 Alton Town Council publicised its intention of reviewing the Neighbourhood Plan, explaining its approach and inviting comments. As Covid-19 restrictions were in place, it was not possible to hold any community events. Details were sent to statutory consultees, and information was delivered by Royal Mail to every household in the Town, as well as being widely publicised on the Council's website and on social media. The response was overwhelmingly supportive.



A part of the Launch Event

4. Overview of Alton



Aerial view of Alton

Alton is an historic and characterful market town in East Hampshire.

Population: at the time of the 2011 Census it had a resident population of 17,816 within the Town Council boundary. Most of these live in the town, although the boundary extends across a 'strategic Gap' in the built area to include the village of Holybourne.

Landscape: Alton is set within a distinctive chalk landscape setting, at the source of the River Wey. It sits relatively hidden in a hollow, which is encircled by sloping downland that provides a green skyline. Someone passing by on the A31 road could be forgiven for not realising the town lies nearby. Immediately to the south west is the northern edge of the South Downs National Park. Within the town are a number of cherished public open spaces, such as Kings Pond, Flood Meadows, Anstey Park, The Butts, the Public Gardens and St Lawrence Churchyard.

4. Overview of Alton



Built area: although Alton has expanded in recent decades, the built-up area remains relatively contained within an area about 3 kilometres long and 2 kilometres wide. The built environment can be described as having four elements, namely: central older areas; outer residential areas; industrial areas; and Holybourne village. There are four Conservation Areas, three in Alton and one in Holybourne.

Transport: there is a twice-hourly direct rail service into central London, with Alton being at the end of the line. The town sits just off the A31 dual carriageway – which acts as a southern bypass – running from Guildford to Winchester, and it is connected to Basingstoke to the north by the A339. There are substantial commuting flows into, out of and through the town. At some junctions and pinch points, traffic congestion regularly occurs at peak hours.

Town centre: the main focus of the town centre is the High Street, which runs south west to north east, with the Market Square just off this axis in Lenten Street. It is a commercial and social hub for the town and its rural hinterland, and there is a popular weekly street market. That said, there are a number of vacant retail units. As a retail and service centre, Alton serves as many people from outside the town as from within. In particular, it attracts pupils to its secondary schools and sixth-form college.



Alton from the air, 2007

4. Overview of Alton



Economy: the town's mixed economy includes two fair-sized light industrial estates. Most businesses have been long established in the area, although there is evidence of a growing number of knowledge based businesses. Brewing, which had been a significant local industry, has declined and the town's remaining brewery closed during 2015. There are some tourist attractions, including the Watercress Line steam railway, and nearby are Jane Austen's house at Chawton and Gilbert White's house at Selborne.



A typical scene in the industrial area

Community: Alton can boast a generally high quality of life and it is a popular, safe place to live. As well as the schools, facilities include various health-care facilities, a Community Centre and a Sports Centre. There is a strong sense of community and the people who live here identify with Alton. It has an active Town Council, based at the Town Hall in the Market Square, which manages local assets such as open spaces, sports pitches, games pavilions and the Assembly Rooms. There are various residents' associations, an Alton Society and Alton Charities Together, amongst other groups.



The Assembly Rooms

5. Plan scope and objectives

The Alton Neighbourhood Development Plan covers the period to 2028 and so is aligned with the timescale of the *East Hampshire: Joint Core Strategy*.

The prime driver for this Plan is to manage growth positively. Taken together, developments which are already underway and those that will result from the *Joint Core Strategy* allocation represent a significant expansion of Alton. The town's population could increase by as much as 25% in a period of thirteen years. It is clear from the level of developer interest and recent planning applications that this scale of growth is likely.

This raises both opportunities and challenges for sustainable growth. Alton Town Council and its residents want to ensure that:

- Development takes place in appropriate locations;
- It happens in ways which contribute to meeting local needs; and
- Local infrastructure is able to expand at the same pace.

Growth needs to respect various constraints in the area, for example those associated with transport networks, landscape, and flooding. It could equally boost town centre viability and help deliver better facilities and services.

Key constraints:

- Maintaining landscape setting
- Areas of significant flood risk
- Limitations of current road network
- Capacity of existing sewerage system

Main opportunities:

- Providing homes to meet local needs
- Boosting town centre viability
- Improving services and facilities
- Enhancing public open spaces

The Neighbourhood Development Plan seeks to balance these constraints and opportunities, taking into account the preferences of local people and the practicalities of creating a deliverable Plan.

The Alton Charter set out the scope of the Alton Neighbourhood Development Plan. It sought objectives and policies against five themes, which are:

- Housing, including development site preferences;
- Transport and parking;
- Health, community and recreation facilities;
- Schools and education;
- Economic sustainability and viability.

Under these themes some 14 objectives were set and they are listed in the table below. The themes and objectives draw upon the earlier work in Alton and were finalised after assessing the evidence base, consulting widely and checking their alignment with local and national planning policies.

5. Plan scope and objectives

| Themes | Neighbourhood Development Plan objectives | Related Joint Core Strategy policies | Main NPPF or NPPG references |
|--|---|---|---|
| Housing (including general design issues) | 1a. To ensure that future housing development in and around Alton respects the character of the town and the surrounding countryside. | CP2, CP20, CP25, CP29, CP30, HE2, HE4, HE5, HE6, HE7, HE8 | NPPF Paragraphs 127, 131, 170, 172 |
| | 1b. To ensure that new housing contributes to the needs of the town in terms of the mix and design of dwellings. | CP10, CP11, CP13, CP29 | NPPF Paragraphs 61, 62, 127 |
| | 1c. To influence the location, scale and pace of housing development over the plan period (to 2028). | CP2, CP10, CP18, CP20, CP21, CP23, CP25, CP26, CP27, CP28, H1 | NPPF Paragraphs 103, 108, 111 - 113, 61, 65, 127, 92, 96, 98, 149, 150, 157, 170 - 172, 174, 175, 180, 189, 193 |
| | 1d. To ensure that, in the context of sustainability requirements specified by the NPPF, the necessary infrastructural improvements will be implemented in a manner appropriate to the location, scale and pace of the proposed development. | CP31, CP32 | NPPF Paragraphs 108, 109, 157 |
| Transport | 2a. To encourage and influence improvements in the town's infrastructure – particularly to manage traffic – in order to meet current needs and those arising from development. | CP31 | NPPF Paragraphs 103, 104, 108, 109 |
| | 2b. To encourage walking and cycling. | CP31, T3 | NPPF Paragraphs 103 - 109 |
| | 2c. To encourage the provision of public transport services, both within the town and beyond. | CP31, T2 | NPPF Paragraphs 103, 108 |
| | 2d. To achieve appropriate levels of parking both on and off street. | CP29, CP31 | NPPF Paragraph 105 |
| Community, health and recreation | 3a. To support the development of a new/ refurbished Community Centre and a new Sports & Leisure Centre in the town. | CP8, CP16, CP17, HC2, HC3 | NPPF paragraphs 92, 97 |
| | 3b. To support the provision of adequate health services for a growing population. | CP8, CP16, HC3 | NPPF paragraph 92 |
| | 3c. To support the retention of existing public open spaces and the provision of new ones capable of offering sport/ recreational opportunities in line with population growth. | CP17, CP18, CP28 | NPPF paragraphs 92, 96, 97, 99 - 101 |
| Education | 4a. To support the provision of sufficient nursery, school and college places in Alton to meet the growing demand, in accessible locations. | CP16, CP32 | NPPF paragraphs 91, 92, 97 |
| Economic sustainability and viability | 5a. To protect and enhance the role of Alton town centre as a retail, tourism and hospitality hub which is vibrant and adaptable to future needs. | CP7, CP8, CP9 | - |
| | 5b. To develop and enhance the business economy of Alton and Holybourne, to ensure that the town is economically sustainable. | CP3, CP4 | NPPF Paragraphs 80, 81, 85, 117 - 121, 126, 127 |

6. Plan policies

This section sets out the Alton Neighbourhood Development Plan policies. Each of these is presented within a green box and is generally preceded by an account of relevant justification and intent. The policies necessarily focus on issues concerning land use and development.

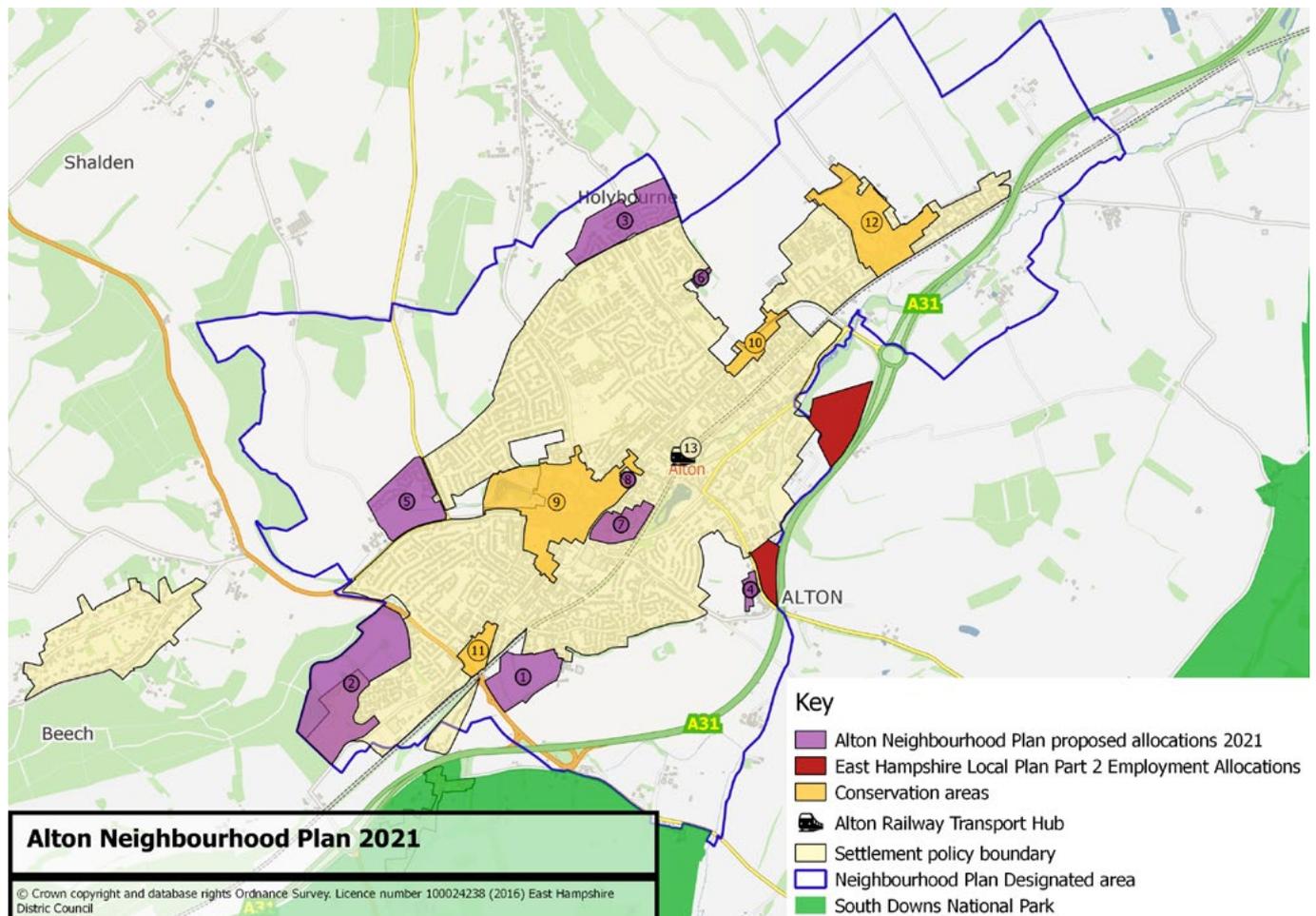
During the course of the work to produce the Plan a number of other actions were identified which could not be framed or were best not framed as planning policies. Some were simply not land use or development issues. They were, nevertheless, considered important given the views expressed by local residents and given their fit with the Plan's objectives. These have become action points (instead of policies) which we, Alton Town Council, have agreed to take forward. For ease of reference they are shown under the appropriate objective within this section of the Plan.

- HOAP – Housing Action Points
- TRAP – Transport Action Points
- CHAP – Community & Health Action Points
- EDAP – Education Action Points
- ESAP – Economic Sustainability Action Points

Furthermore, this Plan does not attempt to cover every land use and development issue. This is partly to retain focus. It is also because it does not need to address issues considered to be dealt with sufficiently by existing (district-wide) policies in the East Hampshire Local Plan. Those policies will still apply where this Neighbourhood Development Plan is silent.

This Plan contains no policy for designating new employment land at Alton. Key potential sites lie just outside or astride the Alton Town Council boundary and, as such, could not be designated by this Plan. That designation task has therefore been left to EHDC, with whom Alton Town Council will liaise.

6. Plan policies



Summary Map of Allocated Sites also Including proposed Employment Sites and Existing Conservation Areas

| | |
|---|---|
| Overall LAA Sites within which housing is planned: | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Land East of Selborne Road 2. Treloar 3. Cadnam: <i>As at April 2021 at an advanced stage of build out or almost complete</i> 4. Wilsom Road 5. Will Hall Farm: <i>As at April 2021 at an advanced stage of build out or almost complete</i> 6. Land adjacent to Convent 7. Molson Coors 8. Alton Magistrates Court |
| Sites proposed by EHDC for Employment Use: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lynch Hill Wilsom Road |
| Existing Conservation Areas: | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Alton (Town Centre) 10. Anstey 11. The Butts 12. Holybourne |
| Other Areas: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Railway station/transport hub South Downs National Park |

6. Plan policies - Design

DESIGN POLICIES

Policies in this section apply both to housing and other forms of development.

Objective 1a: To ensure that future housing development in and around Alton respects the character of the town and the surrounding countryside.

DE1: Town setting and natural assets

Justification:

Alton's setting, contained and largely hidden within a valley bowl in the North Hampshire Downs landscape, is a defining feature which underpins its sense of place and is highly valued. The following quotation, which is taken from the *Alton Study* (2013) written by consultants for the District Council, sums it up well.

"The essence of Alton resides in the fact that the town is 'hidden' from the landscape whilst being an integral part of it. Development has been constrained from breaking the green skyline formed by the neighbouring hills, which can be seen from all parts of the town. The undulating, yet open, nature of the land allows panoramic views which give a sense of space, freedom and tranquillity. From most viewpoints surrounding Alton, the town disappears within the landscape as development has not been extended to the skyline."

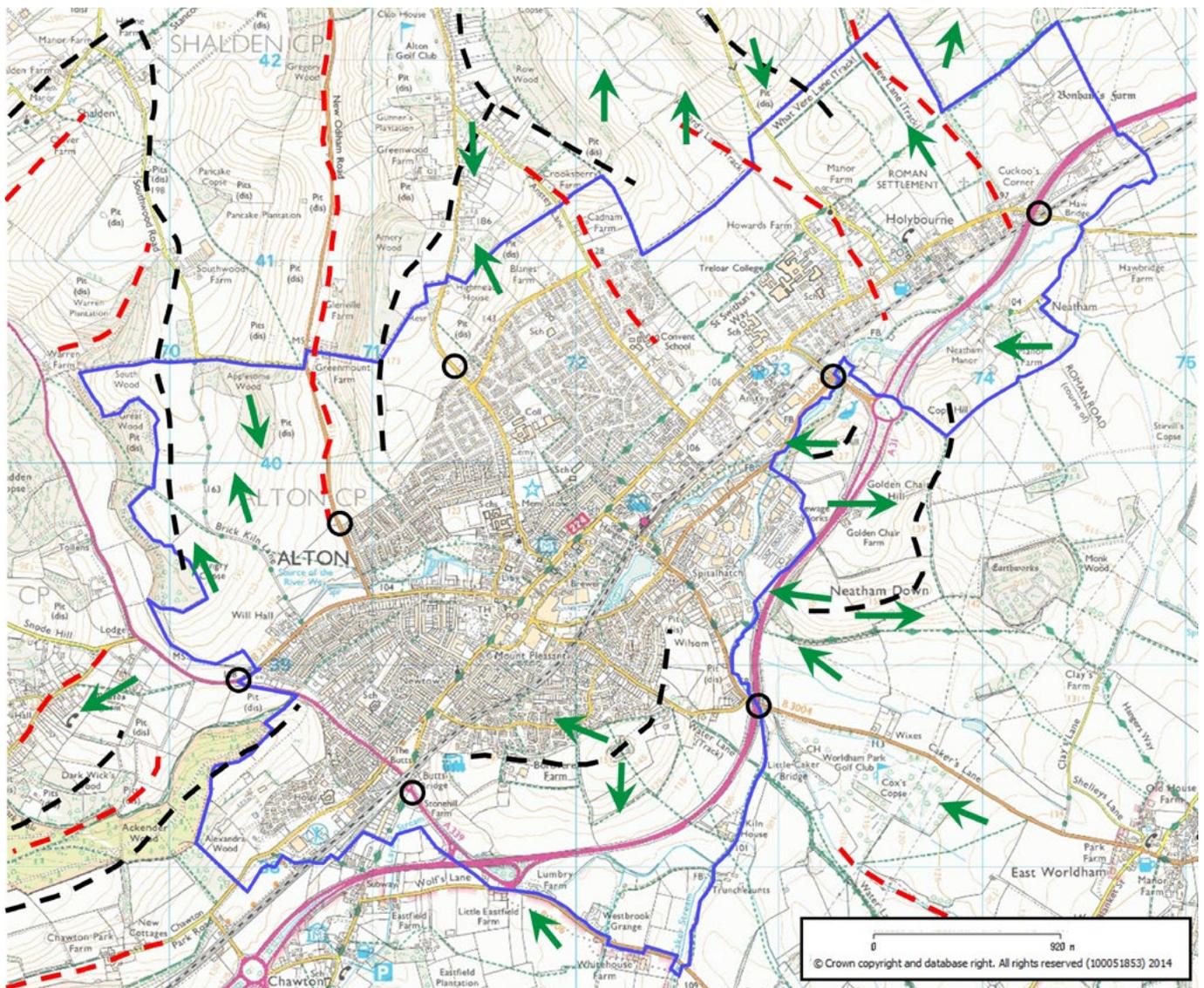
Hampshire Integrated Character Assessment - Alton Townscape Assessment (2010) describes the historic core of the town as lying in the river Wey valley with the church and market place standing on higher ground either side of the river source to the town's western side. The valley has been the defining influence on the growth of Alton. To its north is the 'Lasham downland mosaic', comprising rolling chalk landforms and with long views across the Wey valley. To its south is the 'Worldham greensand terrace' which is in transition to chalk hills at this point, again with views across the River Wey. Landscape sensitivities that are noted include the river course, areas of hanging woodlands and copses on the valley sides, and the skyline and slopes of adjacent downland, where development and loss of tree cover would be very visible from the valley floor. This would include designated sites within and close to the Neighbourhood Development Plan area, such as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation. Such distinctive features should not be harmed.

The South Downs National Park (SDNP) was designated and became operational in April 2011. Alton sought to be included within the park boundaries, but this was not accepted and only a very small part at the southern boundary of the town is included. However, Alton is a gateway town and has a topography which delivers important views into and out of the park. All efforts have been made within this Plan not to compromise this setting through development on higher ground, including policies that allocate sites for housing.

6. Plan policies - Design

The landscape and setting is fully described in the *Alton Town Design Statement*, a document which is already used by the EHDC as a material consideration in determining planning applications. Key elements include:

- River and flood plain: the river Wey rises naturally just west of the town, then runs through flood meadows, before passing through the town and meandering north east. A map of high and medium risk flood zones (3 and 2 respectively) can be found on page 10 of the *Alton Study (2013)*;
- Vistas: the most important vistas into and out of the town were defined for the TDS and mapped at page 5 of that document, showing their direction of view;
- Skylines: the hill-top ridges that surround much of Alton and which create the effect of it sitting within a bowl;
- Gateways: six gateways where roads enter the town are defined and shown on page 24 in the *Alton Study (2013)*, to which we have added a seventh.



Map of Alton Showing Important Views into and out of Town, Gateways, Ridge and Valley Lines from the Town Design Statement



Important views into and out of the town



Ridge Lines



Valley Lines



Gateways into Alton

6. Plan policies - Design

These characteristics were considered by the formal Sustainability Assessment of allocation sites, which was undertaken in 2014 to consider potential housing development sites. They were also considerations within the *Landscape Capacity Study* (2013) for East Hampshire District.

A further consideration is the area's geology. If development were to extend up the hillsides as far as the clay-with-flint capping, it could lead to surface water run off and compromise sustainable drainage. There are several sites where development would need to pay particular attention to drainage.

The Community Questionnaire conducted for this Neighbourhood Development Plan found that the impact of new housing development upon the landscape and skylines was a major concern for almost three quarters of respondents and a lesser concern for most of the remainder. Its impact on town gateways was a major concern for over 60% of respondents and a lesser concern for over 30%. Key issues from the *Alton Town Design Statement* are still seen as highly relevant.

Intent:

This policy aligns with *East Hampshire: Joint Core Strategy* policy CP20 which seeks to: protect and enhance local distinctiveness and sense of place; protect and enhance settlements in the wider landscape, land at the urban edge and green corridors extending into settlements; and incorporate new planting to enhance the landscape setting of development. It also respects *East Hampshire: Joint Core Strategy* policy CP2, which expects development to make the best use of previously developed land and buildings within built up areas.

6. Plan policies - Design

DE1 Town setting and natural assets

Development proposals that impact on the discreet setting of Alton within the surrounding landscape must demonstrate that this setting is maintained.

Development proposals that impact on key views and gateways into and out of the town, in particular from the National Park to the south, and as shown on the plan on page 18, must demonstrate how they have responded positively to these views and gateways.

DE2: Building design and town character

Justification:

Alton is an attractive market town, full of character and with a long history. Residents are proud of their town and its heritage, whilst equally recognising that the town needs to grow to become more sustainable into the future. It is vital, therefore, that the planning system supports development which respects and contributes to that character in terms of its design, architecture, layout and integration with the rest of the town.

Alton has four Conservation Areas, together with many statutory Listed Buildings. There is also a supplementary (non-statutory) Local List of buildings worthy of some protection. This was originally prepared by the Alton Society and then recognised by EHDC before being updated in 2014. Furthermore, a decade ago Altonians took the opportunity of creating a general vision and plan for their town (*Alton 2020*), and a key output from this was the development of a *Town Design Statement* (TDS) published in 2008. Both of these documents were the product of extensive public consultation, making use of a widely recognised Market Towns Healthcheck approach. The guidelines in the *Town Design Statement* are used by EHDC as a material planning consideration.

This approach is consistent with the design-led approach as captured in national planning policy. The Plan sets out the Council's approach towards a clear design vision and expectations for development sites. This will ensure that applicants have as much certainty as possible about what is likely to be acceptable.

6. Plan policies - Design

The built environment of Alton and Holybourne is described in some detail in Chapter 5 (Architectural Overview) of the TDS. This distinguishes key features in different neighbourhoods, which are: the three historic areas (historic centre, New Town and Normandy Street/Anstey Street); the three outer residential areas (western area, southern area and northern area); the industrial areas; and Holybourne. Design considerations which were identified as being important through the work to create the TDS include:

- Setting and landscape;
- High-quality design and respect for town character;
- The provision of amenity spaces;
- Complementary design of buildings;
- Respect for architectural surroundings e.g. scale, materials and form;
- Appropriate building heights;
- The provision of public open space.

The four Conservation Areas have their own characteristics. The Historic Centre (designated in 1970 and extended in 1982) has a medieval street pattern, many historic buildings, the market square, St Lawrence Church and surviving brick pavements. Anstey (designated 1995) is a largely residential area with buildings that mostly date from the 18th or 19th centuries, the predominant building material being red brick, although many are rendered or white washed. Street-side and large gardens are a feature. The Butts (designated 1975) is the grassed mediaeval archery ground surrounded by mature trees and some late Victorian housing, mostly rendered and colour-washed. Listed 18th century buildings include a current public house (The French Horn) and a former public house (Butts House). Holybourne village (designated 1977) contains some thirty Listed Buildings from the 16th to 19th centuries and the partly Norman Church of the Holy Rood. Mature trees, flint walls and high hedges along the narrow lanes are features.

Relevant comments most frequently made by those responding to the Community Questionnaire were that new development should be of high design quality and should fit in with its surroundings.

6. Plan policies - Design

DE2 Building design and town character

All development in Alton will be required to seek exemplary standards of design and architecture with a high quality external appearance that respects those characteristics of its setting.

In the context of Alton, the following should be taken into account to ensure that development responds to the character and distinctiveness of the town.

- Development should seek to maintain and wherever possible enhance the character of its locality, paying particular attention to appropriate appearance, size, scale and density. Building heights should be carefully considered in respect of their impact on the skyline of the town, landscape and streetscene;*
- Where it is proposed to build to a higher density than that present in adjacent development high-quality design must be employed to ensure that the proposal integrates harmoniously with its surrounding environment. Any high density residential developments must still be able to demonstrate access to adequate levels of private amenity space;*
- The appearance and materials used in development should complement, but do not necessarily need to imitate, the best examples of building and design in the local vicinity. Once again such design should make appropriate reference to the scale and form of the architectural surroundings. Quality, innovative design will be encouraged where appropriate;*
- Development should seek to conserve the significance of heritage assets and their setting.*

The action point for Alton Town Council which relates to this objective is:

DEAP1: We should ensure that the Alton Town Design Statement is maintained in line with the East Hampshire: Joint Core Strategy and with the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

6: Plan policies - Housing

HOUSING POLICIES

Objective 1b: To ensure that new housing contributes to the needs of the town in terms of the mix and design of dwellings.

HO1: Housing mix on development sites

Justification:

It is important that developments cater for the range of local housing needs, offering an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes and an appropriate mix of tenures. This will help ensure that developments promote more sustainable communities, with people from different age groups and backgrounds.

The *East Hampshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2013)* acknowledged that the district faces “acute pressures for affordable housing need”. The affordable housing need across the whole district, based on net changes in household formation, was for 461 affordable dwellings per year over the next 5 years and for 256 affordable dwellings per year over the next 17 years. According to the 2011 Census 68% of Alton households are owner occupiers.

The district’s Homechoice list of those in housing need contained 1,985 households (April 2014). Of the 492 who expressed a need in relation to Alton, 286 (58%) were assessed as needing a 1 bedroom dwelling, 138 (28%) as needing two bedrooms, 52 (11%) as needing three bedrooms and 16 (3%) as needing four bedrooms. There is therefore a particular need for smaller dwellings. This reflects the demographic profile of Alton, which consists of 30% one-person households (2011 Census).

Responses to the Community Questionnaire similarly found many with housing affordability issues. Asked about difficulties finding suitable accommodation in Alton, almost a fifth cited a lack of affordable housing for sale and around a fifth cited a lack of affordable housing for rent. (These two groups may overlap.) A large majority thought it important that new housing should help local people (including young people) to stay living in Alton and Holybourne. The types of new housing that gain most support from residents are starter homes, small homes and affordable homes.

Intent:

Policy HO1 therefore expects all new residential developments at Alton to include a mix of dwellings, both in terms of size and tenure. Sustainable developments will include a good proportion of smaller dwellings with one or two bedrooms.

The *Joint Core Strategy* policy expects 40% of the total number of dwellings being provided on a site to be affordable dwellings. Affordable housing can include various tenures suited to those whose needs are not met by the market, including social rented, affordable rented and intermediate (or mixed tenure) housing. The affordable housing should be spread across a new residential development, being located adjacent to market housing and not simply clustered in distinct areas.

6. Plan policies - Housing

This policy aligns with *East Hampshire: Joint Core Strategy* policy CP11 which expects new residential development to deliver a range of dwelling tenures, types and sizes to meet housing needs. It is also aligned with Joint Core Strategy policy CP13 which sets a target for 40% of all new dwellings to be affordable housing, normally to be provided on site. The tenure, type and size of affordable dwellings is to be negotiated with EHDC.

HO1 Housing mix on development sites

Housing development on allocated sites or other major (as defined by national policy) housing development, must provide a range of dwelling types, tenures and sizes to meet housing needs. On these sites, subject to being part of a wider mix, the provision of housing that meets a range of community requirements, including retirement, extra care housing and other housing for the elderly, those with special or supported needs and those wishing to build their own home, will be supported.

HO2: Storage facilities for household waste

Justification:

Modern refuse and recycling practice means that households will have a number of bins and containers which they need to store. If there is inadequate provision of storage for them, they may be left in open view and detract from the quality of the street-level environment. Recent experience in Alton is that adequate storage facilities have not always been provided at developments. Guideline 5.10 of the Alton TDS also identified space for refuse and recycling bins as important.



Waste Bin Storage at Barley Field Estate, Alton

6. Plan policies - Housing

Intent:

Policy HO2 therefore expects all development, whether residential or non-residential, to provide storage facilities for household waste and recycling bins and containers of a size and form which means they can be hidden from direct view from the street. Where storage facilities are to service communal flats, provision should be in proportion to the number of dwellings. Where existing properties are being converted or subdivided, provision should similarly be adequate for the number of dwelling spaces being created. This policy aligns with *East Hampshire: Joint Core Strategy* policy CP29, which expects development to make provision for waste and recycling bin storage and collection within the site.



Waste Bin Storage at Barley Field Estate, Alton



Waste Bin Storage at Anstey Road, Alton

HO2 Storage facilities for household waste

New waste-generating residential development, including conversions or subdivisions, will be expected to provide adequate off-street refuse storage hidden from direct view from the street. The provision of off-street refuse storage must not be to the detriment of the provision of an appropriate level of private amenity space for either existing or future residents.

6. Plan policies - Housing

The action points for Alton Town Council which relate to this objective are:

HOAP1: As a statutory consultee, we should ensure that adequate emphasis is given to the provision of affordable housing and the priority of its allocation to local residents.

HOAP2: The Alton Local List (of buildings of architectural merit but which do not warrant national listing, as endorsed by the Town Council and District Council), should be taken into consideration when dealing with planning applications or other issues which may impact the integrity and merit of such buildings. This List should be maintained and updated.

HOAP3: We will prompt EHDC to ensure that the highest environmental and energy conservation standards are met.

Objective 1c: To influence the location, scale and pace of housing development over the plan period (to 2028).

Objective 1d: To ensure that, in the context of the sustainability requirements specified by the NPPF, the necessary infrastructural improvements will be implemented in a manner appropriate to the location, scale, and pace of all proposed development.

HO3: New housing site allocations

Justification:

Based on a *Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Local Housing Requirements Study* (2013), EHDC made provision in its *Joint Core Strategy* for 10,060 new dwellings to be built throughout the district over the plan period from 2011 to 2028. As a market town and the district's largest settlement, Alton received a strategic allocation of 700 (minimum) of these new dwellings. As noted earlier, this is in addition to 1,031 dwellings previously allocated or with existing planning permission or expected windfall sites. Given the shortage of currently available and deliverable brownfield sites, this required development will largely need to take place on edge-of-town greenfield sites.

EHDC runs an annual call for available sites for such development, to which any landowner can respond. This process, including a call in summer 2014, resulted in a database of available sites. As part of its *Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment* (SHLAA), EHDC sifted out clearly inappropriate sites and shortlisted thirteen potential sites around Alton. These were then subjected to a Sustainability Assessment by specialist consultants, to review each site's likely opportunities and constraints, taking account of a range of environmental, social and economic factors. This was available to the Alton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, as were other useful reports such as the *East Hampshire Landscape Capacity Study* (2013).

6. Plan policies - Housing

The Community Questionnaire provided an initial set of views from residents. It found that the main concerns with regard to new housing development were: adequate infrastructure (a major concern for 91%); environmental impact (87%); traffic generation (80%); and impact on the landscape and skylines (74%). Residents felt strongly that infrastructure (roads, schools, etc) must keep pace with and be in place for housing growth. Residents also commented frequently on the potential for water run-off from slopes around the town to impact development sites.



Evidence of rain water run-off leading to flooding from high ground in North Alton across Gilbert White Way



Evidence of rain water run-off leading to flooding from high ground in North Alton

Residents were asked about specific larger SHLAA sites. There was (net) support for development at only one (Lord Mayor Treloar), although opposition to another was relatively modest (Borovere). The scale of the allocation to Alton means, of course, that other significant sites must be identified for development. Selecting them, however, took particular account of residents' views about infrastructure, environment, traffic and landscape, including where impacts could be minimised or mitigated. It also took account of views expressed at a further community engagement exercise in November 2014, when more useful information about preferences was generated in response to a presentation on emerging site allocations. The Modified Plan community engagement exercise in February and March 2021 echoed this position.

6. Plan policies - Housing

Comments provided to date by statutory bodies have been taken carefully into account. Perhaps the most important are comments from Thames Water about public sewerage and waste water infrastructure. Most development sites at Alton will require works to upgrade and increase capacity in the current infrastructure.

Weighing up the preferences, evidence and constraints, sites have been selected which meet the necessary criteria by being available for development, deliverable (built) within the plan period and capable of development in a sustainable way.

Intent:

Policy HO3 allocates six sites at Alton with a total capacity for 877 new dwellings over the plan period to 2028. Those sites are listed in the policy below.

The total allocation below takes account of three factors. First, the need to provide a buffer (over and above the minimum 700), in line with good planning practice and in case some sites do not come forward as expected. Second, a requirement placed on this Neighbourhood Development Plan to compensate for a reduction by 60 in the number of dwellings expected to be built on part of Lord Mayor Treloar which was allocated some years ago. Third, the need to reflect outline planning permissions now granted for an additional 156 dwellings at Land East of Selborne Road and Lord Mayor Treloar.

Additionally, the modification process reviewed and updated the allocation policies as indicated in the table below.

The allocation made in this Neighbourhood Development Plan relates to the requirement for the entire Neighbourhood Plan area, including Alton town and Holybourne village. This makes use of the flexibility afforded to Neighbourhood Development Plans and the paucity of suitable development sites in Holybourne.

HO3 New Housing Site Allocations

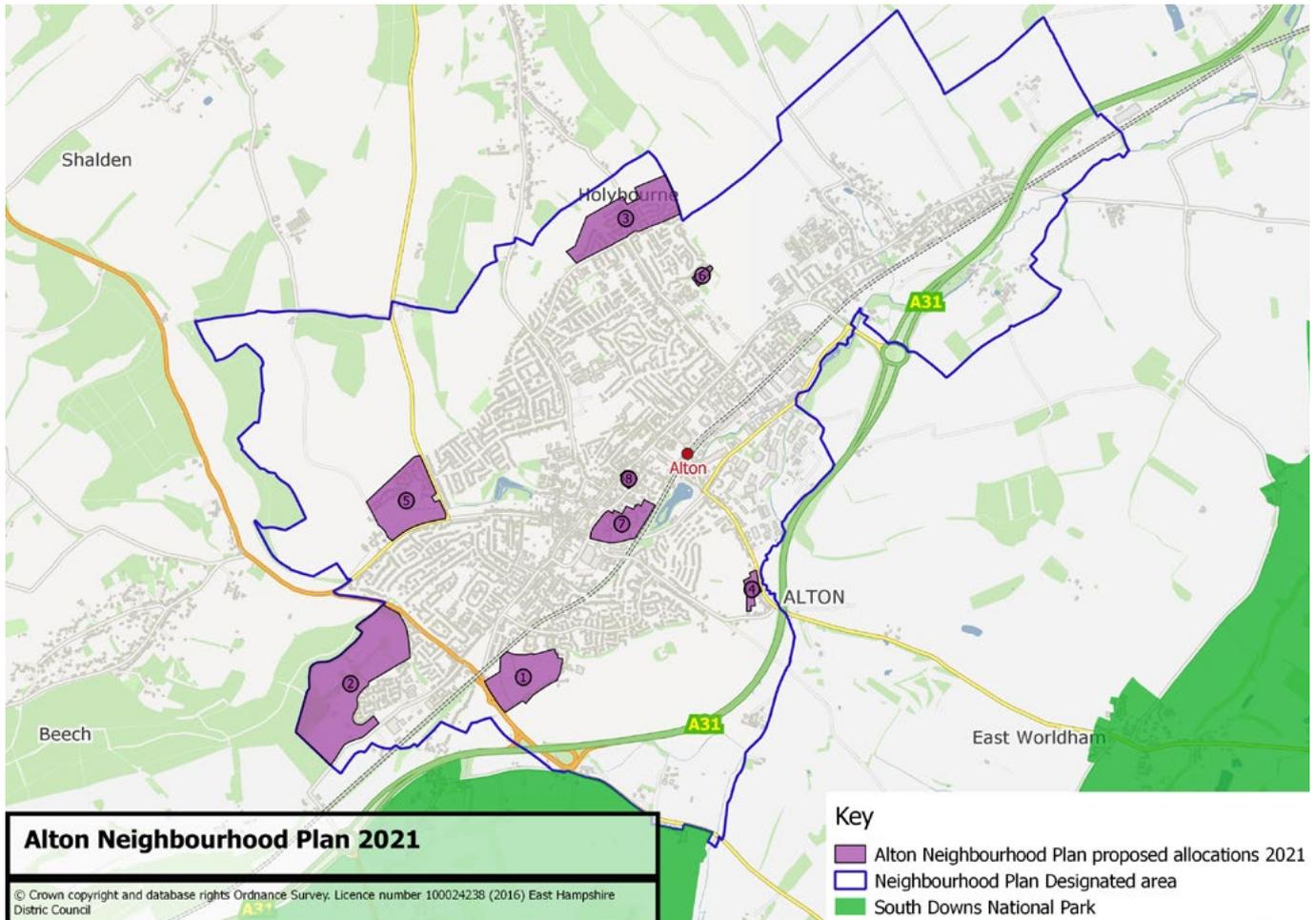
Permission will be given for new housing as set out in the table immediately below and as shown on site allocation plans.

| Site name | Policy number | Dwelling allocation | 2021 Modification |
|--|---------------|---------------------|--|
| Land East of Selborne Road | HO3(a) | 242 | Allocation to be modified in terms of development capacity (reduced) due to now having further detailed information regarding site constraints as evidenced in planning application number 30021/065. |
| Land at Lord Mayor Treloar <i>NB. For the avoidance of confusion, this amounts to the total allocation at Lord Mayor Treloar and reflects the outline planning permission granted in July 2015.</i> | HO3(a) | 280 | Existing allocation retained as result of either being at early stages of being built out or have not yet commenced. |
| Land off Wilsom Road (between numbers 60 and 86) | HO3(c) | 11 | Allocation to be modified in terms of development capacity (reduced) due to now having further detailed information regarding site constraints as evidenced in planning application numbers 55638/001 and 33920/008. |
| Land adjacent to Alton Convent School, Anstey Lane | HO3(e) | 18 | Existing allocation retained as result of either being at early stages of being built out or have not yet commenced. |
| Molson Coors | HO3(f) | 283 | New housing site within existing Settlement Policy Boundary coming forward through the planning application process now. |
| Alton Magistrates Court | HO3(g) | 43 | New housing site within existing Settlement Policy Boundary coming forward through the planning application process now. |
| Total allocation | | 877 | |

6. Plan policies - Housing

The Neighbourhood Development Plan is not in a position to specify the exact phasing of development on these sites. The speed at which new housing can be built will be largely dictated by infrastructure constraints, which will in practice spread delivery over much of the Plan period.

The location of the six allocated sites is shown on the following proposals map of Alton.



Summary Map of Allocated Sites

Overall LAA Sites within which housing is planned:

1. Land East of Selborne Road
2. Treloar
3. Cadnam: *As at April 2021 at an advanced stage of build out or almost complete*
4. Wilsom Road
5. Will Hall Farm: *As at April 2021 at an advanced stage of build out or almost complete*
6. Land adjacent to Convent
7. Molson Coors
8. Alton Magistrates Court

6. Plan policies - Housing

The aim is to ensure sustainable development at each of these sites. The following therefore provides, where appropriate, a description of the development that would be permitted, information on constraints that must be addressed and information about public benefits which they will be expected to deliver. It notes certain infrastructure requirements that will have to be addressed before dwellings can be built or occupied. These will need to be fully addressed within the documentation for site planning applications and after having been properly considered to the satisfaction of the relevant statutory bodies. In particular, developers should demonstrate there is adequate waste water/sewerage capacity and surface water drainage, both onto and off the site, to serve their specific development proposal and that it would not lead to problems for existing or new users. In some circumstances this may make it necessary for developers to carry out appropriate site specific drainage studies to ascertain whether the proposed development will overload existing infrastructure. Where there is a capacity problem and no improvements are programmed by the water company, the developer needs to agree required improvements with the water company and their funding, prior to any occupation of the development.

Specific Housing Sites

The following provides policy information for each allocation site and a map showing site boundaries, indicating any specific areas of land that are expected to be left as open green space.

6. Plan policies - Housing

HO3(a) Land east of Selborne Road site

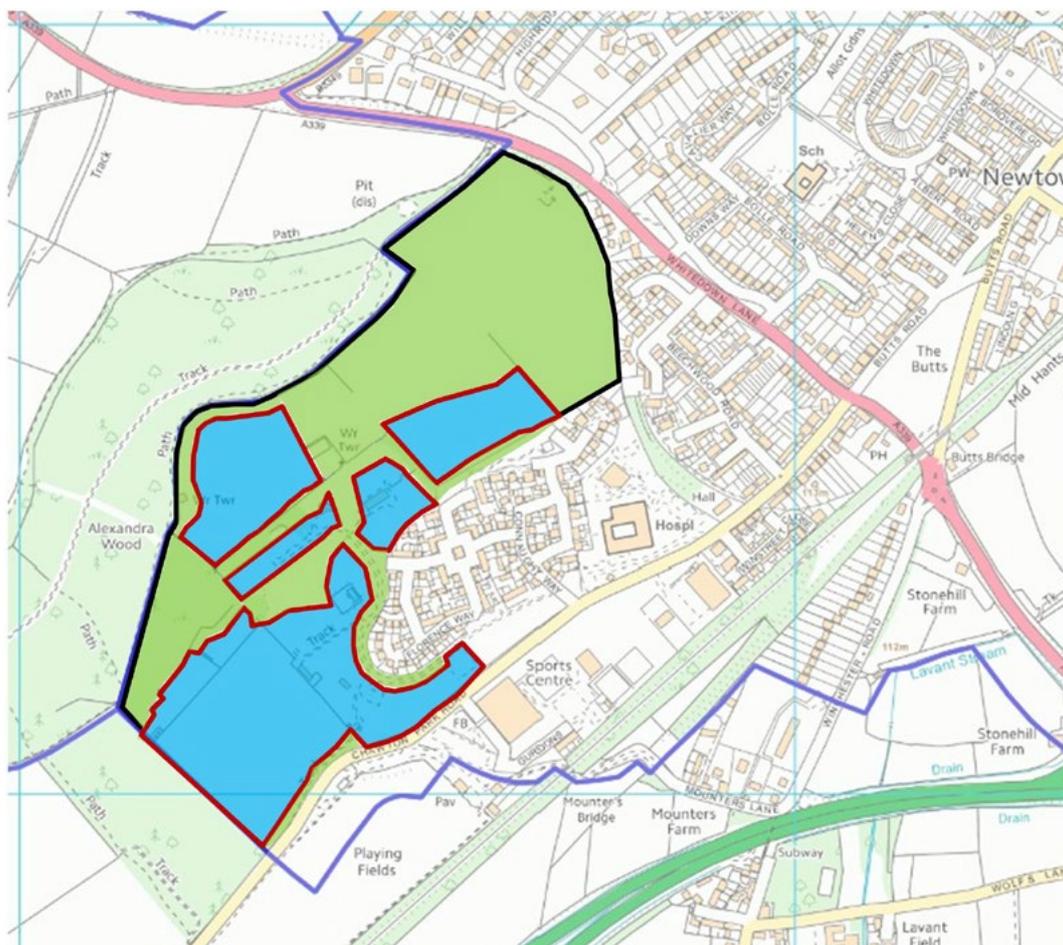
Land is allocated East of Selborne Road (242 dwellings) and at Lord Mayor Treloar (280 dwellings) for a total of 522 dwellings. This reflects planning permission granted in July 2015. The developable boundaries of these sites are shown on the following two plans.



Borovere Farm Site.

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6. Plan policies - Housing



0 380 m

Treloar Site, showing in green the areas not to be developed.

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6. Plan policies - Housing

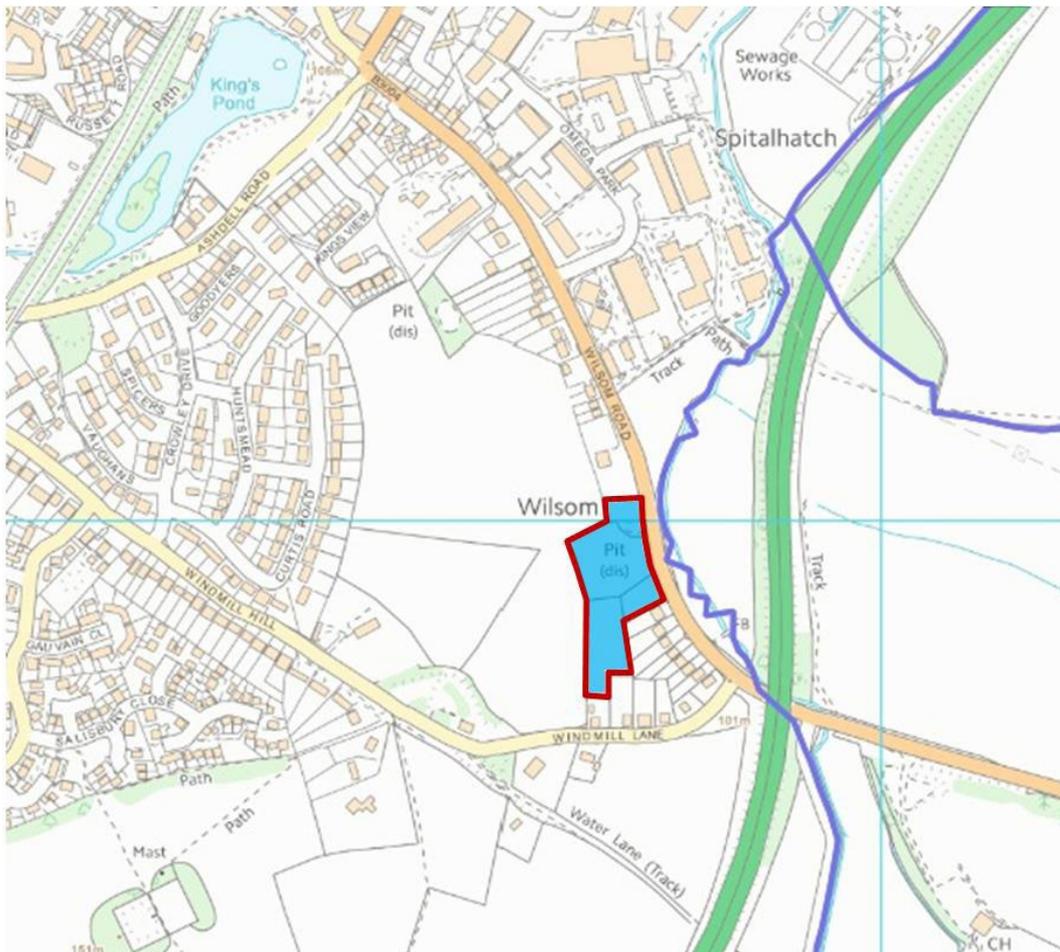
Policy HO3(b) (Land at Cadnam, Upper Anstey Lane)

At an advanced stage of build out or almost complete.

6. Plan policies - Housing

HO3(c) Land off Wilsom Road (between numbers 60 and 86)

Land is allocated off Wilsom Road for a total of 11 dwellings. This reflects planning permissions granted in October 2018 and March 2020. The developable boundary of this site is shown on the following plan.



Wilsom Road Site.

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6. Plan policies - Housing

Policy HO3(d) (Land at Will Hall Farm)

At an advanced stage of build out or almost complete.

6. Plan policies - Housing

HO3(e) Land adjacent to Alton Convent School, Anstey Lane

This 0.5 hectare site, comprising surplus and overgrown land to the rear of Alton Convent School, is allocated for residential use.

The site will deliver a high quality development that will:

- Make provision for approximately 18 dwellings with an indicative net density of 36 dwellings per hectare;
- Seek to retain or replace mature trees on site.



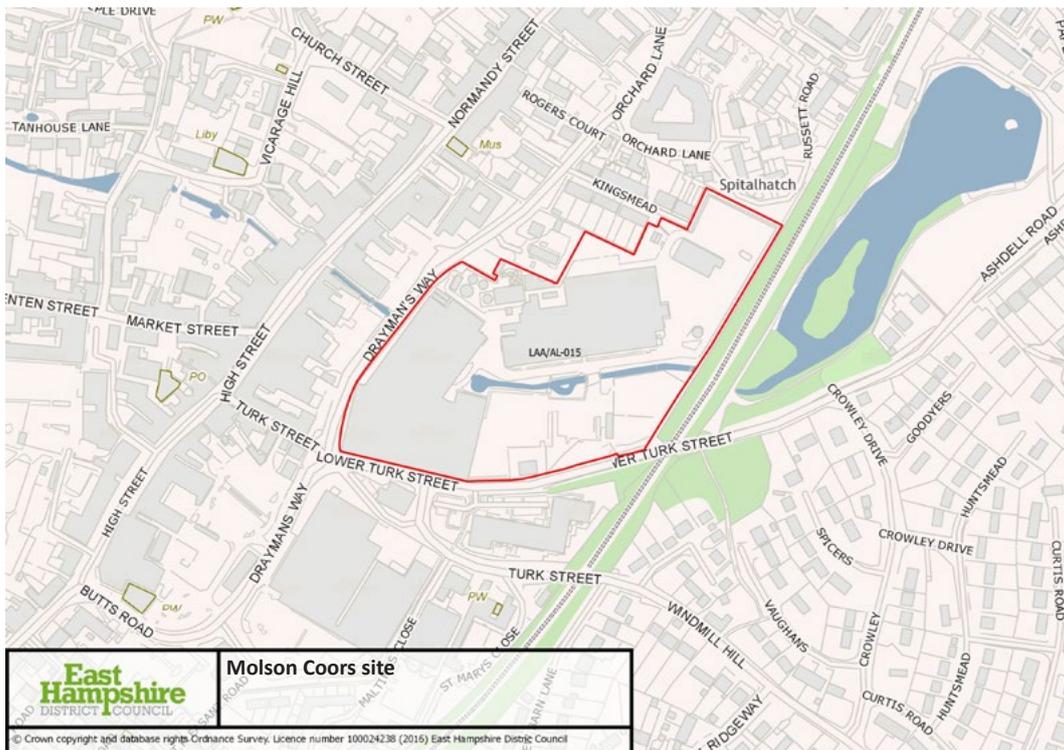
Convent Site.

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6. Plan policies - Housing

HO3(f) Molson Coors

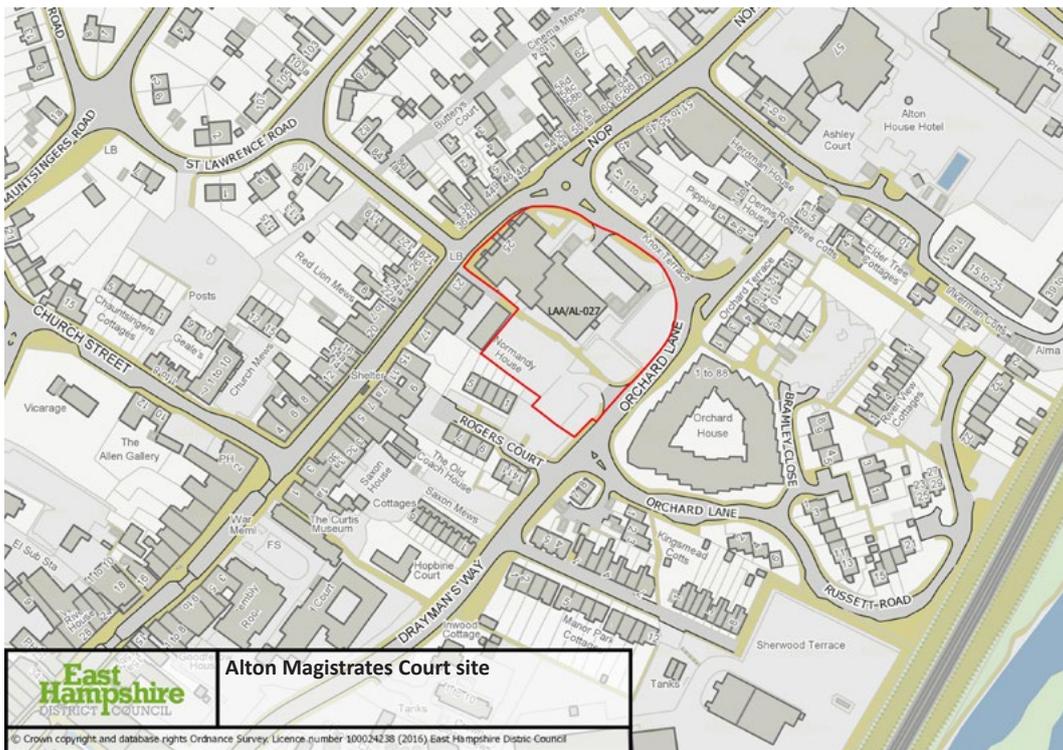
Land is allocated at Molson Coors for 283 dwellings. This reflects the resolution to grant 250050/059. The developable boundary of this site is shown on the plan.



6. Plan policies - Housing

HO3(g) Alton Magistrates Court

Land is allocated at Alton magistrates Court for 43 dwellings. This reflects the grant of planning permission 56420/001. The developable boundary of this site is shown on the plan.



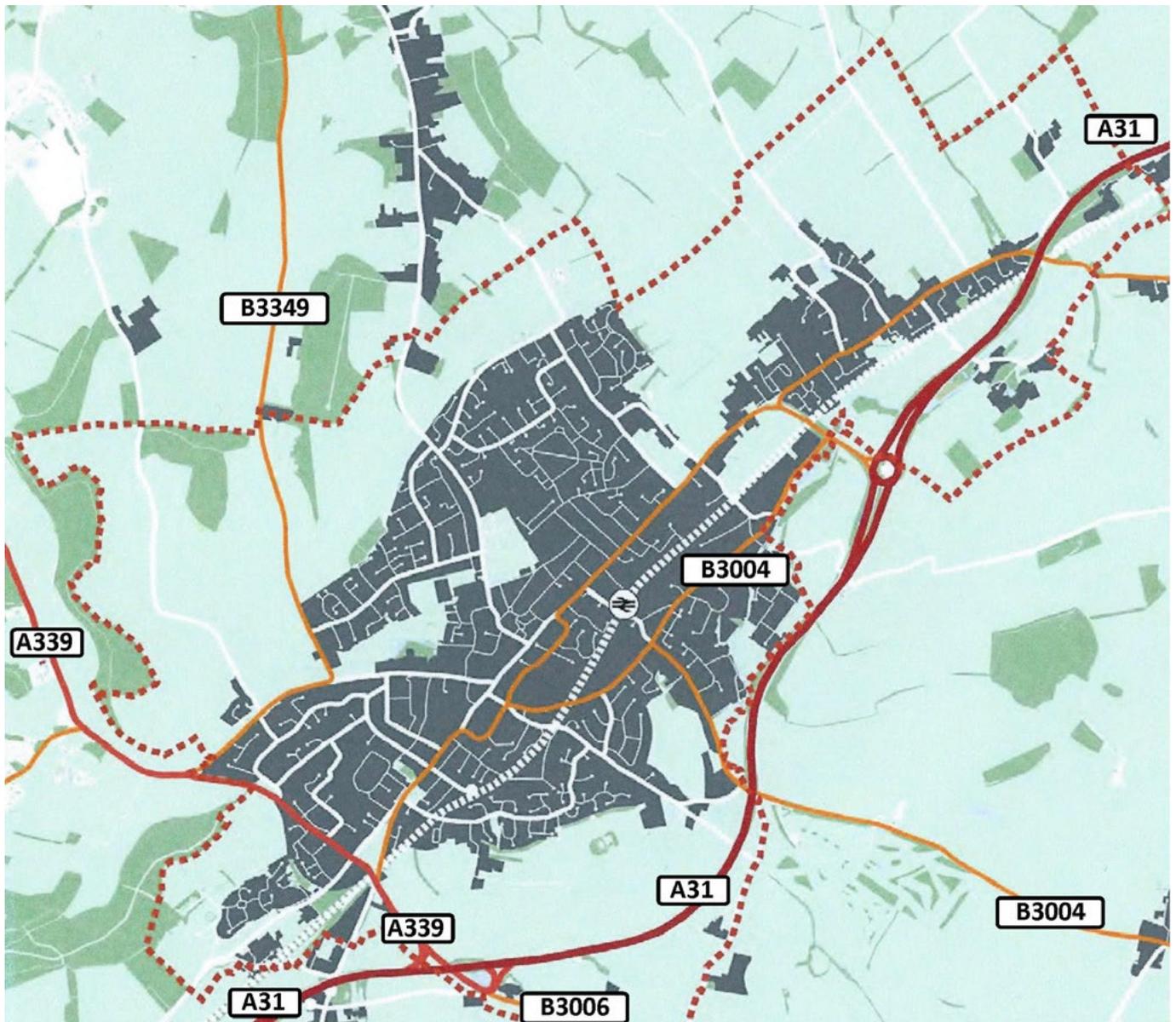
6. Plan policies - Transport

TRANSPORT POLICIES

The policies in this section seek to ensure that Alton's future transport needs are properly met, making allowance for the town's planned growth. The road network will require adaptation and improvement, and new housing developments will realistically need to provide sufficient parking space. Policies will also make it easier for people to walk, cycle or take public transport, thus reducing the demand for motorised transport.

Objective 2a: To encourage and influence improvements in the town's infrastructure – particularly to manage traffic – in order to meet current needs and those arising from development.

6. Plan policies - Transport



Alton's Road Network

- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Minor
- Local
- Railway
- + Station
- Urban Structure
- Parish Boundary

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6. Plan policies - Transport



Junctions known to be overloaded at present during peak periods.

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1. Butts Road - Whitedown Lane;
2. Whitedown Lane - Chawton Park Road;
3. Basingstoke Road - Whitedown Lane;
4. Wilsom Road - Ashdell Road - Paper Mill Lane - Mill Lane;
5. Mill Lane - Montecchio Way;
6. Anstey Road - Anstey Lane; and
7. London Road - Montecchio Way.

6. Plan policies - Transport



Butts Bridge - a brick arch structure.

6. Plan policies - Transport



Roads in developments should be capable of adoption as public highway

The action points for Alton Town Council which relate to this objective are:

TRAP1: We will press the Local Highway Authority to reduce the impact of traffic flows on A339 Whitedown Lane. A reduction in heavy traffic is most likely to be achieved through the provision of a Western Bypass.

TRAP2: We will prompt the Local Highway Authority to prepare a timetable for works to improve operation and reduce delays at key junctions within the town, particularly:

- Anstey Road / Anstey Lane;
- Mill Lane / Paper Mill Lane / Ashdell Road / Wilsom Road (at Spitalhatch);
- Butts Road / Winchester Road;
- Whitedown Lane / Chawton Park Road;
- Whitedown Lane / Basingstoke Road;
- Basingstoke Road / New Odiham Road;
- Mill Lane / Montecchio Way.



“Severance” - heavy traffic on Whitedown Lane cuts off the Leisure and Health facilities from the rest of the town.

6. Plan policies - Transport

TRAP3: We will work with the Local Highway Authority to improve the streetscape and reduce traffic speeds in the town centre and in the vicinity of schools.



Enhancing the streetscape in the Town Centre remains a priority



Traffic speeds should be kept low near Schools

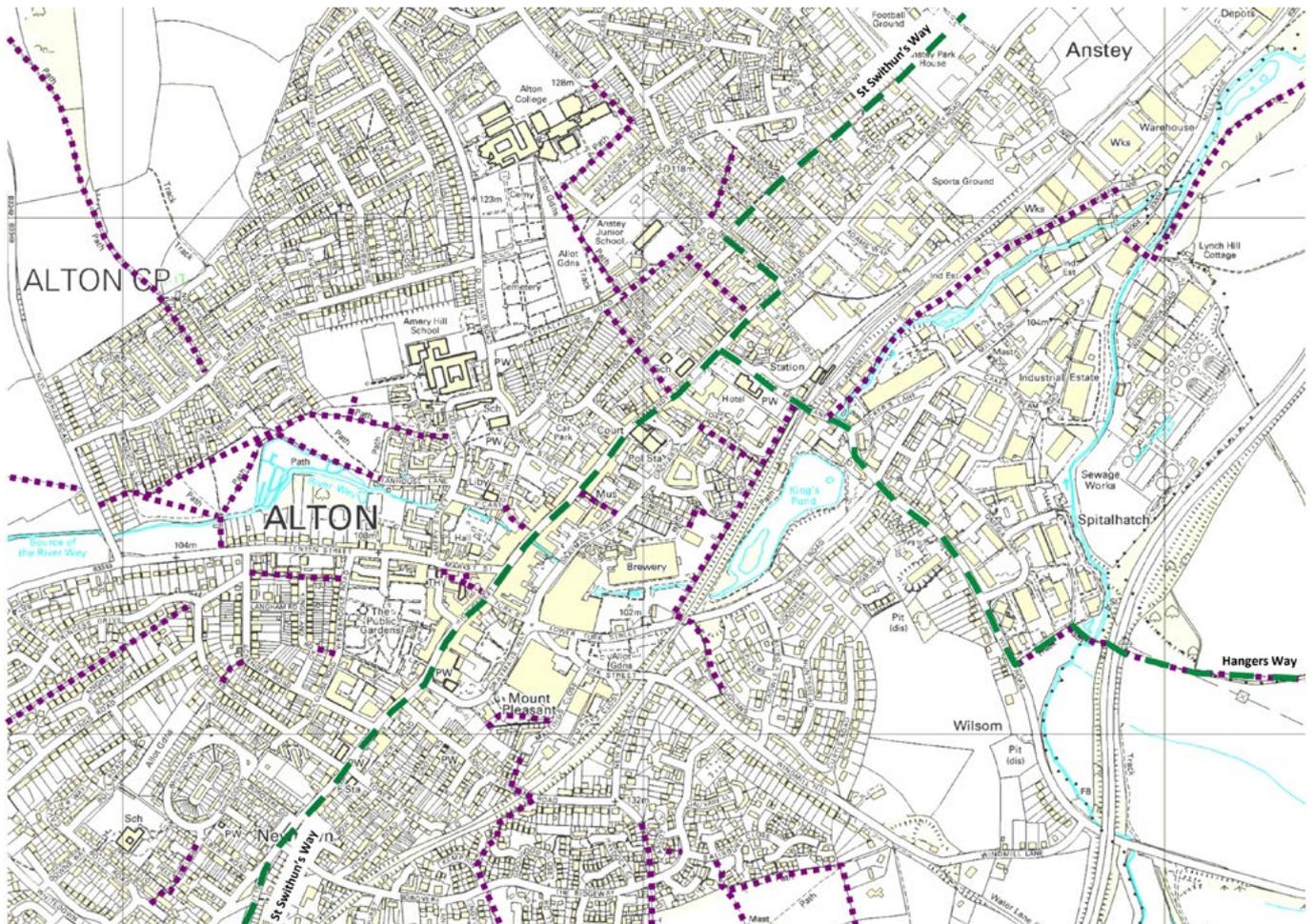
6. Plan policies - Transport

Objective 2b: To encourage walking and cycling.

TR1: Pedestrian networks

Justification:

Alton is fortunate to have a network of footpaths and alleys that provide good pedestrian permeability in much of the town, complemented by roadside pavements. This network includes designated public footpaths leading from the town into the surrounding countryside. Some paths connect well with public open spaces, offering attractive through routes. Because the town is fairly compact it is relatively easy to move about on foot. Alton has been accepted as a 'Walkers are Welcome' town and there is an annual walking festival. Almost all those who responded to the Community Questionnaire said that they walked at some time and over three-quarters did so frequently (an encouragingly high figure, though in some cases this may include walking in conjunction with other modes e.g. to a bus stop).



The town has many public footpaths and bridleways

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-  Long Distance Path
-  Footpath

6. Plan policies - Transport

The questionnaire identified some impediments to walking. The main impediment to walking was parking on pavements, with others citing narrow pavements, places without pavements and a lack of safe crossing places. Asked about priorities for new provision the majority of responses related to sites for potential new housing development. Over 200 specific comments were made by residents suggesting measures to improve walking.

Intent:

It is important that residents, commuters and visitors to the town have opportunities to move around on foot. Policy TR1 therefore expects developments in Alton to provide traffic free routes for pedestrians, including pavements and footpaths.

It expects these to link up with the existing network of pedestrian routes. This permeability will enable residents moving in to developments to make journeys on foot and will enable other pedestrians to move easily through development areas. It will also assist wheelchair users.

This policy is aligned with *East Hampshire: Joint Core Strategy* policy CP31, which promotes the use of sustainable transport modes. It similarly aligns with policy objective 12 in the County Council's *Local Transport Plan (2011)*.



Footpaths can provide attractive links for pedestrians.

TR1 Pedestrian networks

Where appropriate, development proposals will provide linkages within, into and out of the site that provide safe pedestrian access. Pedestrian links will be traffic free wherever possible. Proposals should react positively to any opportunity to broaden the local footpath network within Alton.

6. Plan policies - Transport

TR2 Cycle routes

Justification:

Some 72% of those responding to a question about cycle use on the Community Questionnaire said that they used a bicycle and, of these, 32% frequently travelled by bicycle. This compares very favourably with figures for other towns and observation indicates that cycle usage in Alton has been growing. There is a National Cycle Route (number 224) which enters the town from Medstead at the Sports Centre, runs through the town and continues on to Farnham.

No major problem sites were identified for cyclists by the questionnaire, though some junctions are known to cause difficulties. There is a network of public bridleways, byways and quiet lanes in the surrounding countryside, but most routes to them leaving town can be considered unsuitable due to traffic speeds and/or their narrow width. Over 300 specific comments were made by residents suggesting measures to encourage cycling.

Intent:

Policy TR2 expects developments to offer cyclists the benefit of good connections to the surrounding road network, wherever possible avoiding busy or potentially dangerous roads. This should offer cycle routes towards the town centre and to other key destinations including nearby schools. This policy is aligned with *East Hampshire: Joint Core Strategy* policy CP31, which promotes the use of sustainable transport modes. It similarly aligns with policy objective 12 in the County Council's *Local Transport Plan* (2011).

TR2 Cycle routes

Where appropriate, development proposals will provide linkages within, into and out of the site that provide safe cycle access. Proposals will have particular regard to ways that they can reinforce cycle links to the town centre and other traffic-generating development such as schools. Proposals should react positively to any opportunity to broaden local cycle networks within Alton.

TR3: Cycle storage and parking

Justification:

The justification for policy TR2 provided evidence that cycling, which is seen as a sustainable mode of travel, is a popular mode of travel in Alton. If cycle use is to be encouraged among those moving into new housing or using new non-residential developments, then good storage and parking facilities need to be available.

Policies applied by other local planning authorities with a similar ambition to encourage cycling have been considered. Proposed dimensions for cycle storage are broadly based upon the Cycle Parking Guide published by Cambridge City Council. They are designed to be suitable for storing two mountain bikes or alternatively two narrower bikes plus a child's bike.

6. Plan policies - Transport

Intent:

Alton wants to encourage development schemes to include sufficient cycle storage (in the case of residential developments) or cycle parking (in the case of non-residential development), so that cycling to work, to shops or for leisure is an attractive and practical option. Residential cycle storage should be secure and convenient to access the public highway. This could be a dedicated space inside the dwelling or in a garage or a secure facility within the curtilage. In the case of flats the storage space can be a shared facility, as long as it is of sufficient size. Non-residential cycle parking facilities should be provided within or adjacent to the development scheme site.

TR3 Cycle storage and parking

To encourage the greater use of sustainable and non-motorised modes of transport, all new traffic-generating development must seek to provide adequate parking or storage for bicycles.

All new dwellings (including conversions and sub-divisions) must demonstrate how they can achieve secure storage for bicycles that enjoys convenient access to a public highway. The minimum dimensions of any storage space serving a single private dwelling will feature a floor area of 1.5 metres by 2.2 metres and must be accessible via a doorway at least 1.0 metres wide. Shared storage of an appropriate size/form for flatted developments featuring a secure courtyard or entrance hall will be considered acceptable.

All new non-residential developments should provide cycle parking (Sheffield stands or similar).

The action points for Alton Town Council which relate to this objective are:

TRAP4: We will prompt the Local Highway Authority to prepare a timetable for works to improve conditions for pedestrians, particularly at the following locations:

- Crown Hill / Church Street / Normandy Street;
- Selborne Road / Winchester Road / Whitedown Lane / Butts Road (The Butts bridges);
- Old Odiham Road / Greenfields Avenue;
- Basingstoke Road;
- Paper Mill Lane (Station steps);
- Station Road/Forecourt;
- Mill Lane / Paper Mill Lane / Ashdell Road / Wilsom Road (at Spitalhatch).

6. Plan policies - Transport

TRAP5: We will press for footpaths and pedestrian alleyways in the town to be well maintained and clear pedestrian signposting provided, liaising with adjoining Parishes in relation to the surrounding network of public rights-of-way.

TRAP6: We will work with other agencies to ensure that there is adequate pedestrian signage connecting the town centre, the car parks and the railway station with places of interest including:

- Chawton village (Jane Austen’s House and Chawton House);
- Sports Centre;
- Community Centre;
- Cemetery (Fanny Adams’ grave);
- St Lawrence Church (Civil War battle site);
- St Swithun’s Way (long distance path);
- Hangers Way (long distance path);
- The Watercress Line (heritage railway).

TRAP7: We will seek to encourage actions that will reduce the use of cars for school pupil transport. Initiatives such as Walking Bus, or school minibus transport for those living in the outer areas of the town, will be actively supported.

TRAP8: We will work with schools and colleges in the town seeking to promote the use of cycling by pupils and students. Where appropriate we will seek the use of CIL contributions from developers to help achieve this objective.

TRAP9: We will lobby for improvements to be made to National Cycle Route 224 (Medstead to Farnham) on its route through the town and for all designated cycle routes to be maintained in a condition that encourages their use.

TRAP10: We will work with other agencies to ensure that there is adequate direction signing for cyclists passing through the town, particularly along National Cycle Route 224 (Medstead to Farnham).

TRAP11: We will work with adjoining Parishes and other agencies to seek to provide safe cycle connections between the town and surrounding villages.



Clear signposts encourage the use of footpaths

6. Plan policies - Transport

Objective 2c: To encourage the provision of public transport services, both within the town and beyond.

TR4: Bus service provision

Justification:

Alton is currently served by four main bus routes, namely: a half-hourly service from Alton to Winchester; an hourly service from Basingstoke to Liphook; an hourly service from Alton to Guildford; and five journeys a day from Alton to Petersfield. They also act as town services, in particular the route which runs through residential areas on the north side of town. There are also five routes serving Alton College (inbound in the morning and outbound late afternoon), which are open to wider public use.

No patronage data for bus routes could be obtained. Observation is that buses are not greatly used for travel within the town, except the Winchester service where it runs through the north side of Alton. Only the Alton to Guildford service and the Alton to Winchester service are commercially viable, other services relying upon County Council subsidy. Subsidy withdrawal has led to the discontinuation of the Saturday Alton to Petersfield service in early 2015. The most common response about buses in the Community Questionnaire was that they provide only a poor town service. Locations with no convenient bus service include Holybourne, the Industrial Estate and the Ridgeway.



There is no bus route providing an adequate service for Holybourne

The planned growth of Alton could make local bus services more financially viable. Given that it will involve housing development at locations on the edge of the town, bus travel into the centre could be an attractive option, if available. It would help relieve road network congestion and town centre parking demand if more residents are persuaded to switch travel mode from their cars. This aligns with *East Hampshire: Joint Core Strategy* policy CP29 which encourages use of sustainable modes of transport.

6. Plan policies - Transport

TR4 Bus service provision

Any new significant development in Alton should seek to ensure that it is located in reasonable walking distance (400 metres) to a public transport corridor providing regular bus services to and from the town centre.

The action points for Alton Town Council which relate to this objective are:

TRAP12: We will press Hampshire County Council to improve the bus services to Holybourne and to the Mill Lane Industrial Estate. We will also give due consideration to using CIL contributions and other sources of finance to support new bus services which we may choose to promote.

TRAP13: We will press Hampshire County Council to improve bus accessibility between Alton and the outlying villages, using commercially provided or HCC supported services.

TRAP14: We will press Hampshire County Council to provide improved late evening bus services to other towns with significant evening activity (particularly Guildford, Basingstoke and Winchester).

TRAP15: We will prompt Hampshire County Council, Stagecoach and South West Trains to improve co-ordination of rail and bus service timetables at Alton Station.

TRAP16: The provision of a direct train service between Alton and Guildford, as suggested by Surrey County Council, will be supported. We will press Network Rail to redouble the track between Alton and Farnham in order to permit better timetabling and additional services.

6. Plan policies - Transport

Objective 2d: To achieve appropriate levels of parking, both on-street and off-street.

TR5: Parking provision and standards

Justification:

There are nine public off street car parks in Alton town centre, providing a total of 703 spaces. The three largest (each exceeding 100 spaces) are Lady Place, Turk Street and The Bank. In the Community Questionnaire most respondents considered provision to be adequate, though very short stay parking was felt to be insufficient. In some older residential parts of the town there is no off-street parking available and kerbside parking occurs, which can impede traffic flow. Similar problems occur in the vicinity of the rail station and the sixth-form college. Bad parking was considered the second biggest highway safety concern by Alton residents.



Indiscriminate parking badly affects road safety . . .

Responsibility for setting parking standards for development was transferred from the County Council to the District Council. Hampshire County Council withdrew its residential parking standards in 2011 and its non-residential parking standards in 2014. However, EHDC has adopted standards which are based on those previously used by the County. When applied by the County Council these were maximum standards to try to reduce car ownership, in line with (then) national policy; however, this is out of step with current government guidance.



. . . and can cause problems for pedestrians, especially those with pushchairs or walking frames.

Evidence from recent Alton developments where the former standards were applied is that they have led to excessive parking on street and often on verges or around junctions. This has created a poor visual environment and difficulties for drivers. The *East Hampshire: Joint Core Strategy* policy CP29 notably seeks sufficient parking to secure a high-quality environment and the *Alton Town Design Statement*, at guideline 5.12, seeks adequate parking both off-street and kerbside.

6. Plan policies - Transport

Current levels of car ownership in Alton are over 1.2 per household and in East Hampshire are 1.4 per household. Parking standards for the allocated sites for housing growth at Alton should take account of factors set out in the *National Planning Policy Framework*, which are repeated in the *Hampshire Local Transport Plan (2011)*. A mix of housing types is sought on these sites, which implies typical levels of car ownership. Location of the sites around the edge of town implies car ownership could be above average. Similarly, the rather poor availability of town bus services may increase car ownership and parking space needs. Policies elsewhere in this Plan seek to encourage the use of travel modes other than the car, namely walking, cycling and buses.

Intent:

Policy TR5 therefore uses the former Hampshire County Council standards for residential off-street parking for new residential development, but it states them as a minimum level of provision. It does not expect them to be significantly exceeded and overprovision is discouraged. It relates the number of off-street parking spaces to the size of the dwelling. Where communal unallocated off-street parking space is provided the number of parking spaces can be slightly reduced. Where off-street parking is within a garage, this should be of a sufficient size to accommodate modern car designs and provide cycle storage, in line with County Council guidance. The policy expects new housing development schemes to identify roadways where on-street parking would be appropriate and those where it should be discouraged. It also expects there to be sufficient unallocated parking provision for visitors within new housing development schemes and for this provision to be marked as such.



Adequate parking should be provided for residents and visitors alike.

This policy expects non-residential developments at Alton to provide some off-street parking for use by employees and clients at that development. As a general guide applicants should utilise the non-residential standards until recently applied by Hampshire County Council.

6. Plan policies - Transport

TR5 Parking provision and standards

Designated off-street parking

New residential development within Alton will provide an adequate level of off street parking for residents. The following minimum standards will apply:

- 1 bedroom dwellings: 1 parking space*
- 2 and 3 bedroom dwellings: 2 parking spaces*
- 4 bedroom (or more) dwellings: 3 parking spaces*

Where communal, unallocated off-street parking is provided for eight or more dwellings, the minimum standard for 2 bedroom dwellings and above may be reduced by one space per four dwellings.

Garages as off-street parking

Where garages are to be counted as an off street parking space the following minimum internal dimensions should apply:

- Single garage: 3.0 metres wide x 6.0 metres deep*
- Double garage: 5.7 metres wide x 6.0 metres deep*

Visitor parking

New residential development within Alton will provide adequate designated additional parking for visitors, at a minimum of one space per two dwellings. This can either be off-street or on-street, subject to the wider guidance set out within this policy. Visitor parking should be marked as such.

Additional on-street parking

Additional on-street parking provision will be welcomed where appropriate, but should not be used as a substitute for off-street parking provision. Non-designated on-street parking should be restricted along through-routes within new residential developments.

Non-residential parking

Parking for all non-residential uses should be negotiated on a case by case basis and should propose an adequate amount of off-street parking for staff and visitors to ensure there is no impact by way of parked cars on the wider highway network. When determining the amount of parking required by the development the following factors should be considered:

- Projected staff numbers:*
- Projected visitor numbers, as well as the likely time and duration of the visit to establish the requirement at peak times; and*
- The accessibility of the development by modes other than private car.*

6. Plan policies - Transport

The action points for Alton Town Council which relate to this objective are:

TRAP17: We will work with East Hampshire District Council to identify future demand for off-street car parking in the town centre, with the aim of ensuring that additional spaces are provided ahead of demand.

TRAP18: We will press East Hampshire District Council to freeze or reduce the levels of charging in their off-street car parks.

TRAP19: We will press East Hampshire District Council to provide very short stay (maximum 1 hour) parking spaces close to the retail area, with a tariff which starts (preferably at zero cost) for a time period of 15 or 20 minutes. We will also explore with Hampshire County Council the possibility of introducing very short stay on-street parking in the town centre.

TRAP20: We will work with Hampshire County Council as they develop on street parking control measures for critical parts of the town. Particular emphasis will be given to the area around Alton College, and to streets on the periphery of the town centre and in the vicinity of the railway station that are affected by all day commuter parking.

TRAP21: We will seek to identify areas where coaches may be parked during daytime. This is necessary if tourism is to be encouraged.

TRAP22: We will seek to work with South West Trains to ensure that adequate levels of parking are provided at Alton Railway Station. There should be sufficient spaces to cater for both commuters and Watercress Line visitors.

6. Plan policies - Transport

COMMUNITY, HEALTH AND RECREATION POLICIES

The policies in this section seek to improve the quality of life for people living in and around Alton. They promote opportunities for social interaction and wellbeing, as well as for recreation, exercise and outdoor enjoyment. They also support the provision of modern health services that are easily accessible to residents.

Objective 3a: To support the development of a new/refurbished Community Centre and a new Sports and Leisure Centre in the town.

CH1 Community Centre

Justification:

The *Alton 2020* document identified the desire of residents to replace both the Community Centre and the Sports Centre with modern, purpose-built facilities.

The current Alton Community Centre is operated by the Alton Community Association as a registered charity with a management committee of volunteer trustees. It offers a base for a wide range of activities including a play group, youth club, live music, a leisure learning programme, the University of the Third Age, Shopmobility hire, a community club for older people, room hire for many clubs and societies, a cafe and a licensed bar.

The building is well located next to the Bank car park in the town centre. It is an interesting historic building, which spans the River Wey and dates from the nineteenth century. It has had many uses, from tannery to corset factory. The building has been extended over the years to offer ten rooms for community use. Over 1,000 people use the Centre every week. Most of those replying to the Community Questionnaire used the Centre, many of them on a frequent basis.



*Alton Community Centre
- a former industrial building*

However, the Centre is old, in need of refurbishment and does not meet modern standards. It is not a building which could readily be altered or expanded. Previous plans were drawn up by the trustees, with support from the District Council, to deliver a replacement Community Centre, but they stalled due to lack of available funding. In the meantime some refurbishment works have been carried out at the existing Centre. This is welcome, but it is not seen by the interested parties as a long-term solution.

Intent:

Policy CH1 therefore supports the provision of a new Community Centre at an appropriate and accessible site within Alton. Where this is brought forward as a funded part of a wider development scheme it would be viewed as a positive feature of that scheme.

6. Plan policies - Community

CH1 Community Centre

The provision of a new easily accessible multi-purpose community centre or community facilities within Alton will be supported.

CH2 Sports Centre

Justification:

The Alton Sports and Leisure Centre lies on the south western side of town in Chawton Park Road. It was originally developed in the 1970s, by the (then) Alton Urban District Council, and has been added to over time. Its facilities include swimming and diving pools, a sports hall, a fitness centre, tennis courts, squash courts, a climbing wall, a synthetic turf pitch, a play zone, flexible use studios and a cafe. The Community Questionnaire found this Centre to be the most used of all the listed community facilities in Alton, with many respondents saying they were regular users. Asked what open space or leisure facilities they wanted to see in future, a sports centre was the category most often selected.



Alton Sports Centre from the air

It is widely recognised that the existing Sports and Leisure Centre is now nearing the end of its design life and is becoming hard to maintain. The current management contract expires in 2017. EHDC has identified a need to replace or refurbish this centre in its *Leisure Built Facilities Strategy and Action Plan (2012)*, and as a 'critical' project in its *Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2013)*. The District Council has commissioned consultants to look at feasibility and delivery options. Stage One of that work indicates that land adjacent to the existing Centre provides an option and one which need not entail any interim loss of service. That work also notes the scope to release land at the existing Centre as enabling development. The land on which the existing Centre stands is owned by the District Council with some adjacent land being leased from the Town Council. A further stage of this feasibility work is due to be completed in 2015.

6. Plan policies - Community

Intent:

Policy CH2 therefore supports appropriate schemes that come forward to replace or refurbish the Sports and Leisure Centre at Alton. Replacement could happen on land adjacent to the existing centre, though a proposal for another appropriate site in the town would equally be supported. This policy allows for suitable enabling development on the existing Centre site, if a replacement site is forthcoming. Facilities at a refurbished or replacement site would be expected to maintain and preferably enhance the facilities currently provided at the existing Centre.

CH2 Sports Centre

Proposals for a replacement sports centre facility providing an enhanced level of recreational provision to Alton in terms of quality and quantity on or adjacent to the current site will be supported.

Appropriate associated enabling development as part of the same scheme required to cross-subsidise the delivery of the new facility will be supported.

A comprehensive redevelopment of the existing sports centre site and the land adjacent will be supported provided that any new facility is in place prior to the old facility being redeveloped.

Action points for Alton Town Council which relate to this objective are:

CHAP1: In the absence of any proposal for a new Community Centre, we will continue to lobby East Hampshire District Council in order to secure funding to bring the existing Community Centre up to an appropriate standard to meet modern needs and the demands of an increasing population. We will continue to press for land and funding to build a new purpose built Community Centre to open by 2020.

CHAP2: We will work with East Hampshire District Council to achieve a new Sports Centre, sufficient for the needs of the population within its catchment area, being completed by 2018.

6. Plan policies - Community

Objective 3b: To support the provision of adequate health services for a growing population.

CH3: Health facilities and CH4: Community Hospital

Justification:

The provision of NHS services is the responsibility of the North Hampshire Clinical Commissioning Group. Alton is served by two GP practices, the Wilsom Practice located at the Health Centre at the eastern edge of the town centre, where it has a minor injuries unit and there is an independently run pharmacy. This practice has 10 doctors, 6 nurses and 3 nursing assistants. The other GP practice is the Chawton Park Surgery, which lies on the south western side of town adjacent to the Community Hospital. It set up in purpose built premises in 2005 to meet the needs of a growing population. This practice has 10 doctors, 4 nurses and 3 nursing assistants. It has a minor injuries unit and, again, there is an independent co-located pharmacy. These practices serve a population that is larger than Alton's and which includes patients from outlying areas. Both have active Patient Participation Groups which support the development of the Neighbourhood Development Plan. Other health care provision in Alton includes two high street pharmacies and certain commercially operated services.



Chawton Park Surgery

Patients who require hospital treatment will generally go either to Basingstoke or Winchester, both of which facilities belong to Hampshire Hospitals Foundation NHS Trust. Alton Community Hospital is operated by Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust (SHFT). It runs a number of services from the facility and lets space to others, most significantly Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust for outpatient, physiotherapy and x-ray clinics and Age Concern for The Limes Day Centre. SHFT provides a 24-bed in-patient facility for palliative care and to support the rehabilitation/further recovery needs largely of older patients following a spell in secondary care (one of the district general hospitals). The medical cover for the in-patient facility is provided by local GPs. Current health care policy seeks to treat more non-emergency and non-specialist cases close to where people live.



Alton Community Hospital

One of the GP practices reports that it is currently running at capacity and the other reports that it is running close to capacity. A growing number of patient visits would require an increase in GP, nurse and ancillary staff. One of the practices considers it has the building space to accommodate a 15% increase in patient numbers. Pressure on health services is likely to rise for at least two reasons. One is the significant planned growth in the town's population. The other is an ageing population. County Council projections are that in East Hampshire the 85+ age group will increase from just over 3% of the population in 2016 to well over 4% by 2026.

6. Plan policies - Community

The Community Questionnaire found that Alton health care facilities meet most residents' needs, although a significant number noted difficulty obtaining a timely GP appointment. Views were, however, more mixed about the ease of access to hospital facilities, with many respondents citing transport difficulties. Travel to Winchester or Basingstoke hospitals currently requires a change of bus and is particularly challenging in the evening and at weekends. There is no direct rail connection from Alton to either Basingstoke or Winchester.

Intent:

Health care provision is likely to need some expansion during the Plan period, given the town's growth and an ageing population. Managing this would likely require some additional premises space, as well as additional practice staff. The *East Hampshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2013)*, which provides a summary list of the area's investment needs, includes the Alton Health Centre. Policy CH3 therefore supports appropriate extra provision of health care premises at Alton. This could be through expansion at existing site(s) or at a new health centre.

CH3 Health facilities

Proposals to expand current health care facilities in Alton to meet the needs of a growing local population will be supported, with the extension of the two surgeries in the town identified as a priority.

The Alton Community Hospital performs a valuable role, given that major hospitals are some distance away. Policy CH4 therefore seeks to safeguard that site from change of use and supports appropriate extra provision of health care services at the site. There are no current proposals to change its use. Both CH3 and CH4 align with *Joint Core Strategy* policy CP8.

CH4 Community Hospital

The Alton Community Hospital site will be safeguarded for health uses for the duration of the plan period.

Additionally, any proposal to extend the current facility to offer an enhanced level and range of health care service to the town will be actively encouraged.

Action points for Alton Town Council which relate to this objective are:

CHAP3: We will lobby North Hampshire Clinical Commissioning Group to maximise use of a range of specialist facilities and appointment capacity at Alton Community Hospital. We will engage with local providers to ensure that capacity is increased commensurate with population growth, and that standards and levels of provision of all health services are maintained or improved.

CHAP4: We will assist in establishing an Alton group charged with monitoring the provision of all health and care-related services.

6. Plan policies - Community

Objective 3c: To support the retention of existing public open spaces and the provision of new ones, similarly capable of offering sport/recreation opportunities in line with population growth.

CH5: Local Green Space and open space

Justification:

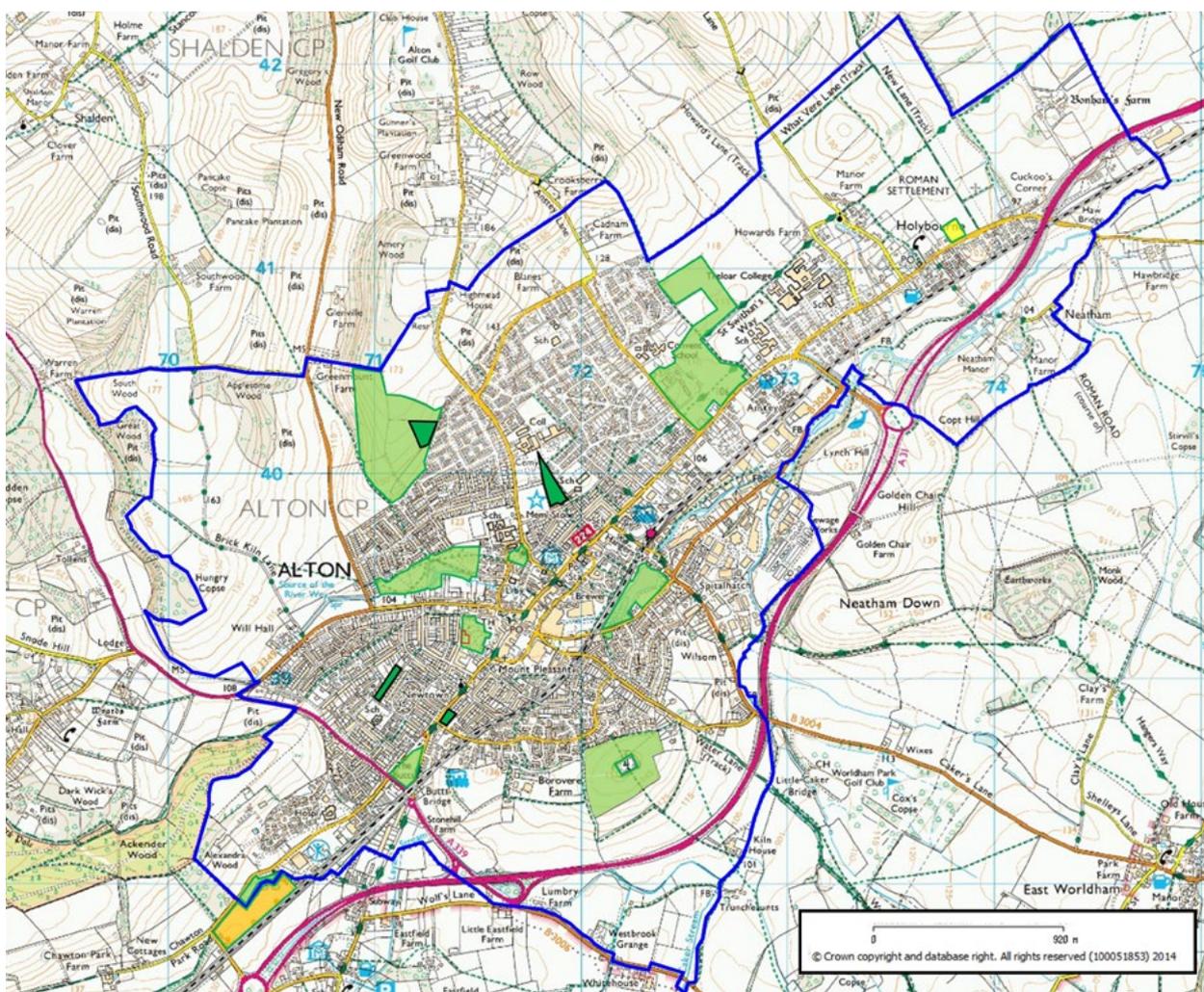
Alton is fortunate in having a number of public open spaces within or adjacent to its built area. These add greatly to the quality of the local environment and many of them are much used for recreation or leisure purposes. Indeed, the consultation undertaken for the *Alton 2020* document highlighted, in particular, local residents' wish to protect and enhance existing parks, allotments and green spaces.



The Public Gardens in the town centre

6. Plan policies - Community

A 2011 report, *Land and Other Properties Managed by the Council*, lists and describes all of those which are managed by Alton Town Council, together with their facilities. These include the Public Gardens, The Butts, Chawton Park Road, Kings Pond, Jubilee Playing Fields, Windmill Hill, Anstey Park, Holybourne Play Area, four sites for allotments (at Borovere, Hawthorns, Spitalfields and Wooteys, and Whitedown), The Dell, Greenfields Amenity Land and Flood Meadows. In addition, St Lawrence churchyard is open space maintained by the Town Council. The total of public open space in Alton is currently 67 hectares of land, which compares with a minimum of 60 hectares expected by local open space policy. It is likely that this total will increase as the town grows, as a result of public open space provided on larger housing development sites, including higher-elevation land at certain sites. It would need to do so to meet the open space expectations set out by the District Council in its *Open Space, Sports and Recreation Study* (2008). It is equally important, therefore, that existing public open spaces are retained.



Alton's Open Spaces

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Allotments



Jubilee Playing Field owned by Alton Town Council outside NP Designated Area



Open Space owned by Alton Town Council inside NP Designated Area



Holybourne Play Area not owned by Alton Town Council

6. Plan policies - Community

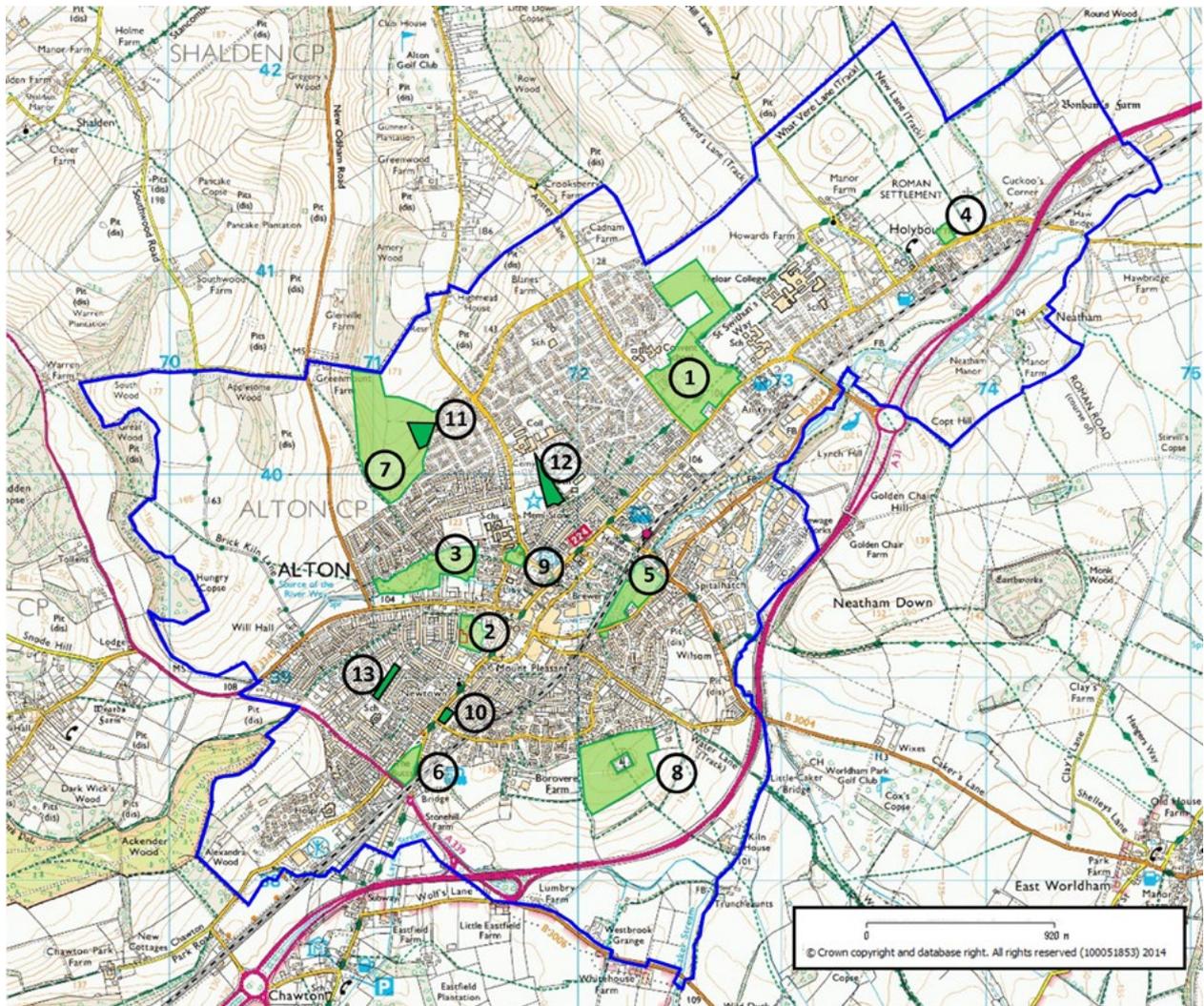
The 2014 Community Questionnaire confirmed the high value that residents place upon these sites. It asked how much residents used a number of the main facilities. Anstey Park, the Public Gardens, the Flood Meadows and Jubilee Playing Fields were all found to be used by at least half of respondents and by many of them on a regular basis. Comments from survey respondents also identified significant use of sites including Kings Pond, The Butts Green, Greenfields and Windmill Hill. When asked about the need for further green space, many residents cited allotments as being important (see also policy CH7 below). More detailed information about the significant use of sites is provided in the table below.

Intent:

Policy CH5 designates and therefore protects valued areas of Local Green Space from development, except in very special circumstances. This policy is aligned with *East Hampshire: Joint Core Strategy* policy CP18. The areas of Local Green Space to be protected meet the specific tests which are set out within the *National Planning Policy Framework* (paragraph 77). They are close to where people live, special to local people and only constitute local areas of land. Their location is shown on the map below. Jubilee Fields is owned and maintained by Alton Town Council, but a large part is in Chawton Parish and is outside the Neighbourhood Development Plan area, so it could not be designated in this Plan. Holybourne Play Area is the only publicly accessible recreational area near the centre of the village from which to enjoy nature and admire the outstanding views northwards to Holybourne Down, the nearest alternative play area being a mile away. It holds particular significance for its local community, including children from several local schools, and the many visitors with families and groups of all ages taking advantage of adjacent free parking.

| Why the identified Local Green Spaces are special: | |
|---|--|
| Anstey Park (15.5 hectares) | Recreational use by sports and social clubs. It has cricket and rugby pitches, tennis courts, a playground and an area for general recreational use. It is crossed by St Swithun's Way long distance path. |
| Public Gardens (1.8 hectares) | Recreational use in the town centre, with some trees and laid out flowerbeds and containing a play area, bandstand and bowling green. Also of historical interest (Roman remains and later an asylum). |
| Flood Meadows (6.0 hectares) | Natural water meadows and land of considerable ecological value, with some historical value (site of death of Fanny Adams). It offers riverside walks, areas frequented by waterfowl on former watercress beds, open space for informal recreation and vistas over the town. |
| Holybourne Play Area (0.7 hectares) | Public access land providing outstanding countryside views and recreational play area. There is also some historical interest from Roman remains. |
| King's Pond (4.0 hectares) | A natural area and an ecological resource, with varied flora and fauna. It has a historic pond and there is a Kings Pond Trail. |
| The Butts Green (1.4 hectares) | Informal recreational use by the public. This is the site of the town's historic archery ground and of the annual Charter Fair. |
| Greenfields (16.0 hectares) | Public access land providing a view point and part is also let for cattle grazing. There is a play area, kick-about area and BMX track. |
| Windmill Hill (10.0 hectares) | Open land with a view point, which is crossed by a public footpath. Its ecology has been subject to an initial light-touch survey. |
| St Lawrence Churchyard (closed to burials) (0.8 hectares) | A popular recreational spot for relaxation, which lies at the heart of the Alton (central) Conservation Area. It is the setting for a Grade I listed church and is the site of a Civil War battle. |
| Allotments (four sites) (6.4 hectares) | Recreational gardening use at Borovery, Hawthorns, Spitalfields & Wooteys and Whitedown. |

6. Plan policies - Community



Designated Local Green Spaces

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Open Space

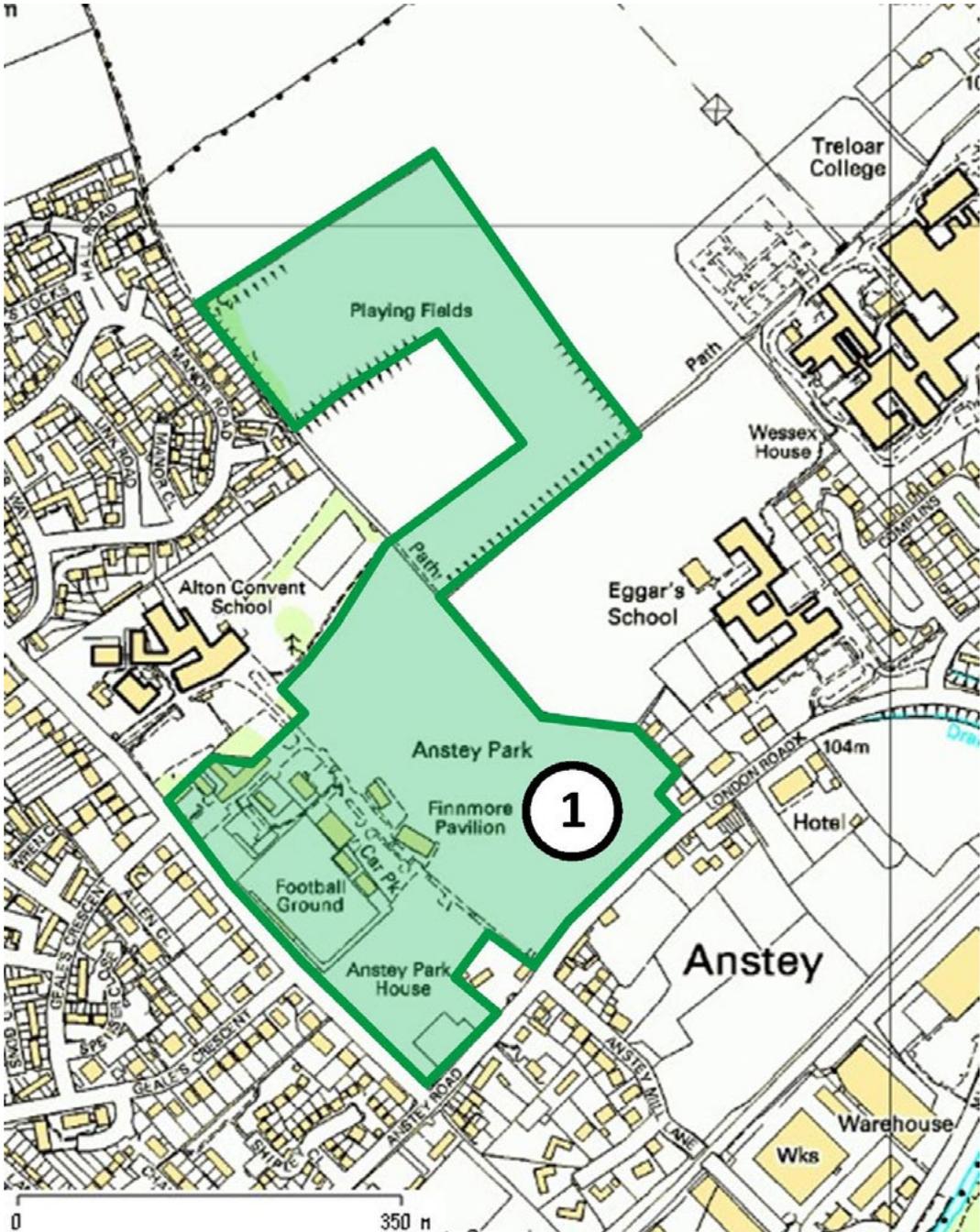
1. Anstey Park;
2. Alton Public Gardens;
3. Alton Flood Meadows (to the rear of Lenten Street);
4. Holybourne Play Area;
5. King's Pond;
6. The Butts Green;
7. Greenfields;
8. Windmill Hill;
9. St Lawrence Churchyard.

Allotment land

10. Borovere;
11. Hawthorns;
12. Spitalfields/Wooteys;
13. Whitedown.

It should be noted that this policy does not deal with new public open spaces on allocated development sites.

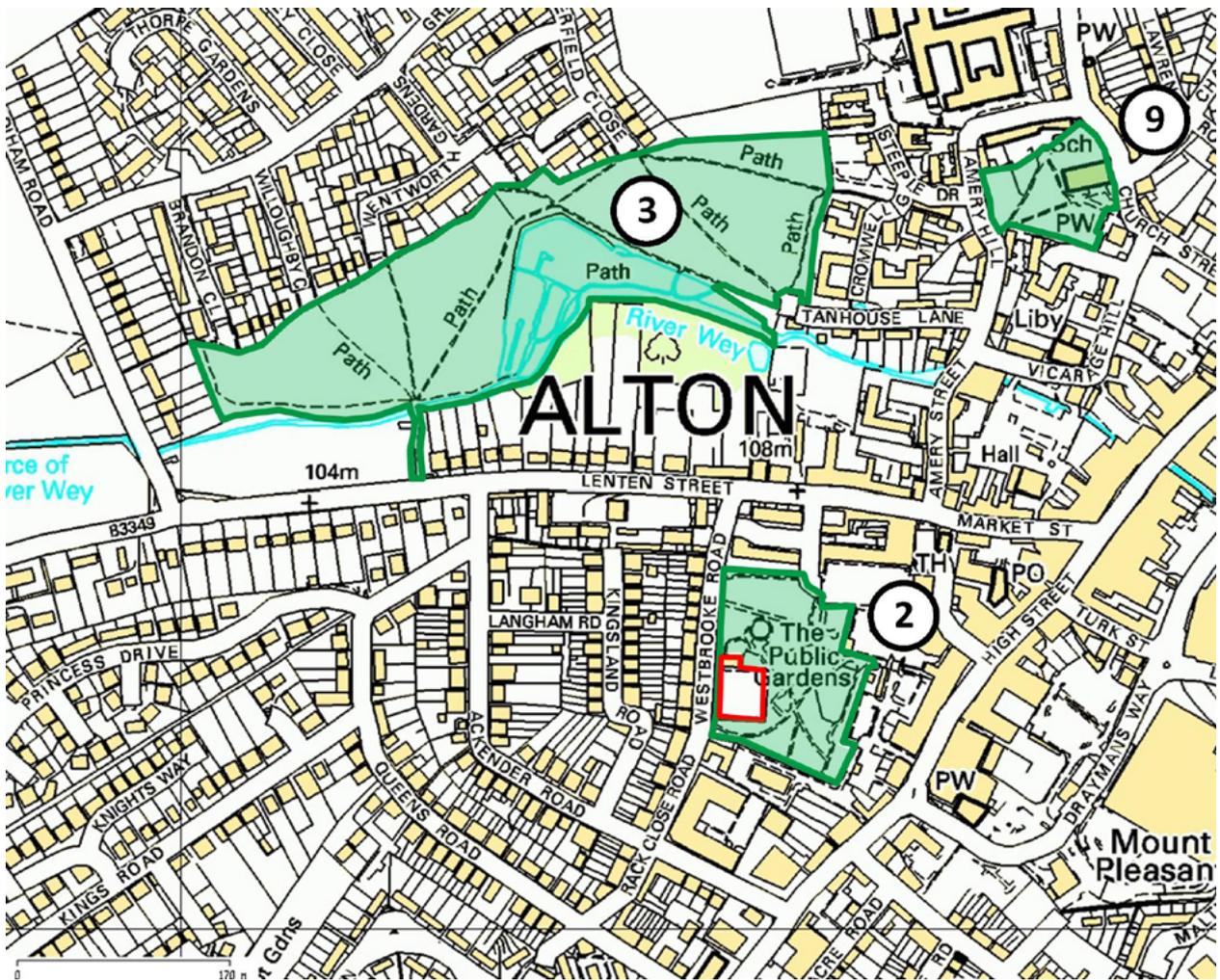
6. Plan policies - Community



1. Anstey Park

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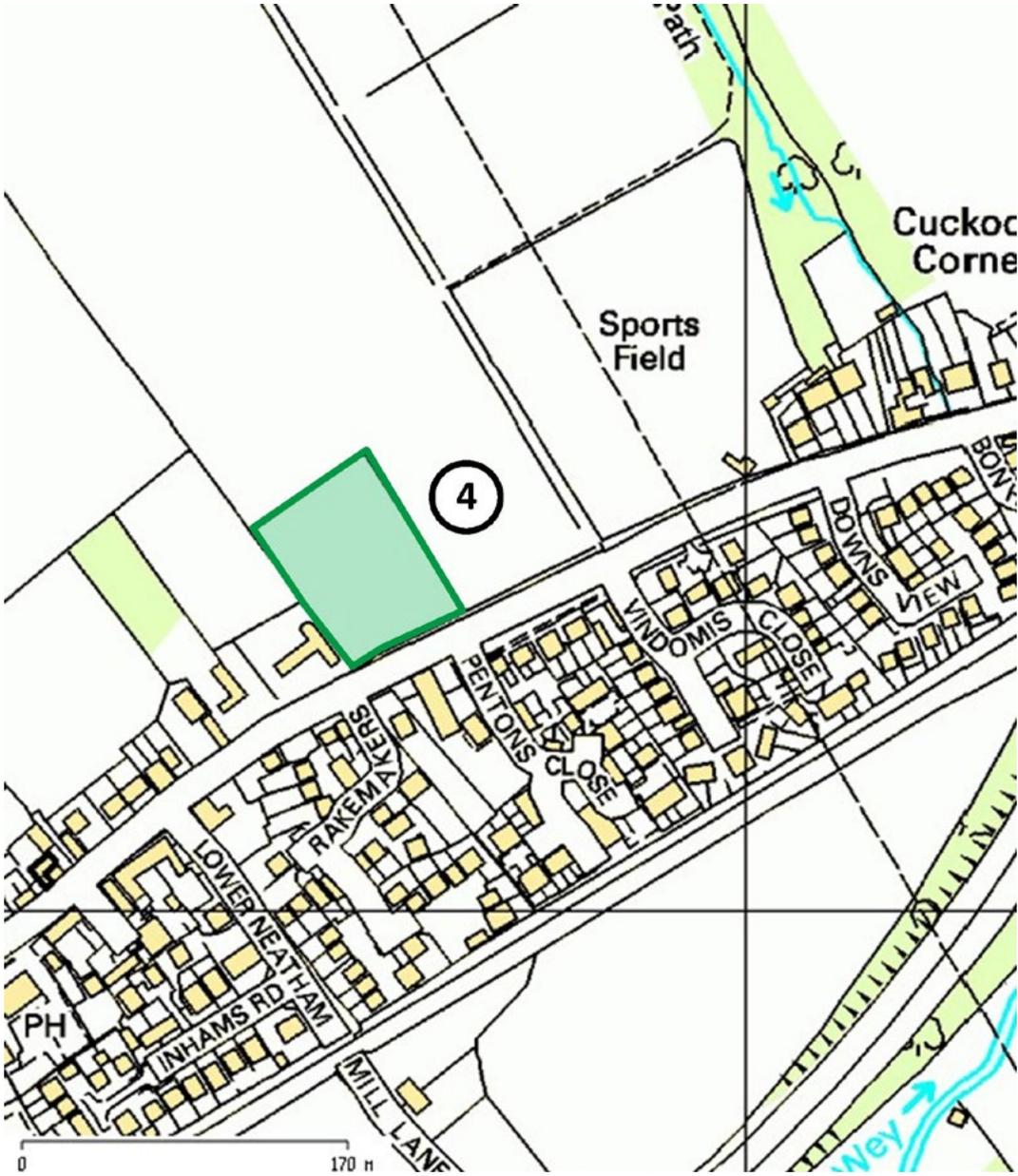
6. Plan policies - Community



- 2. Alton Public Gardens
- 3. Alton Flood Meadows
- 9. St Lawrence Churchyard

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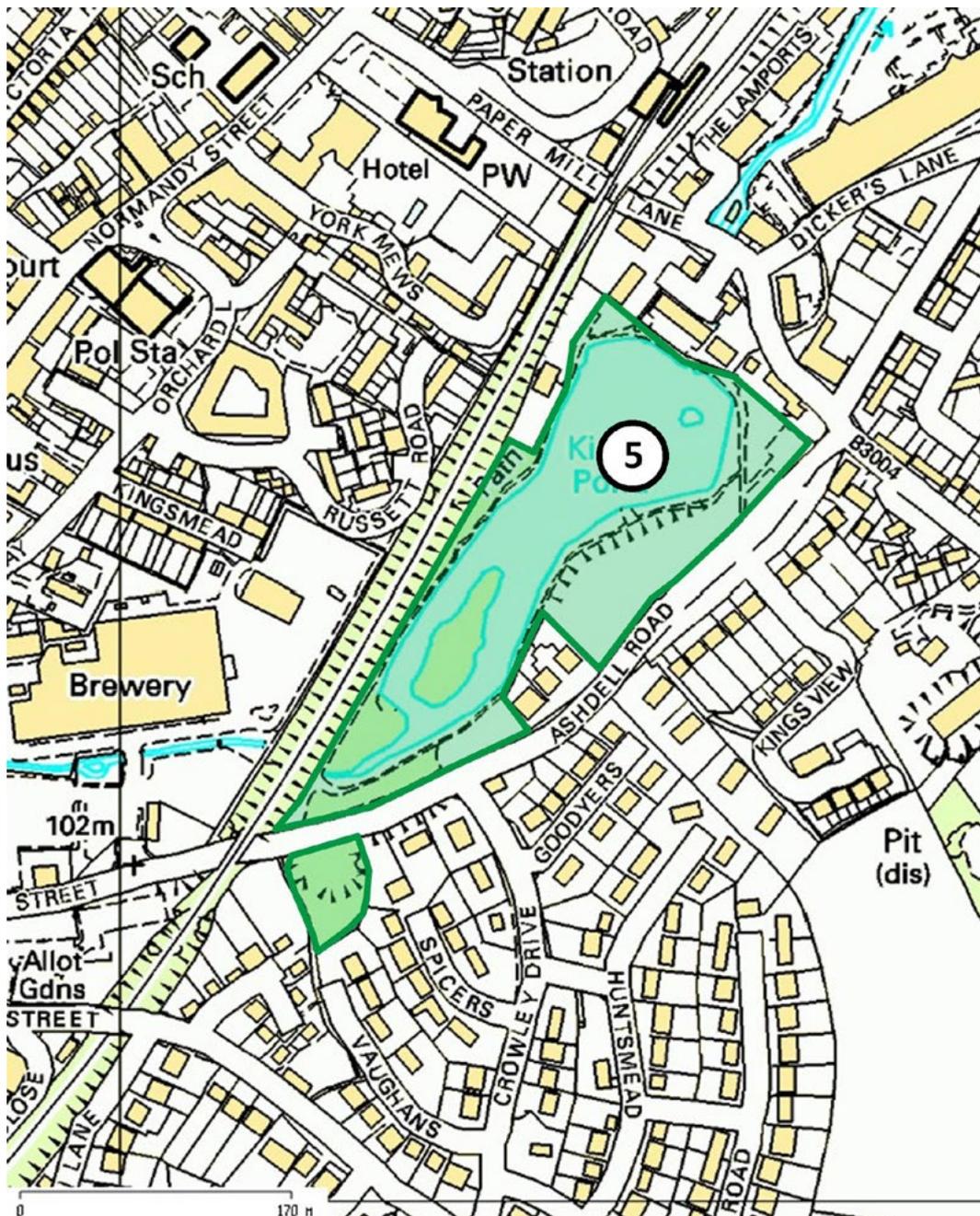
6. Plan policies - Community



4. Holybourne Play Area

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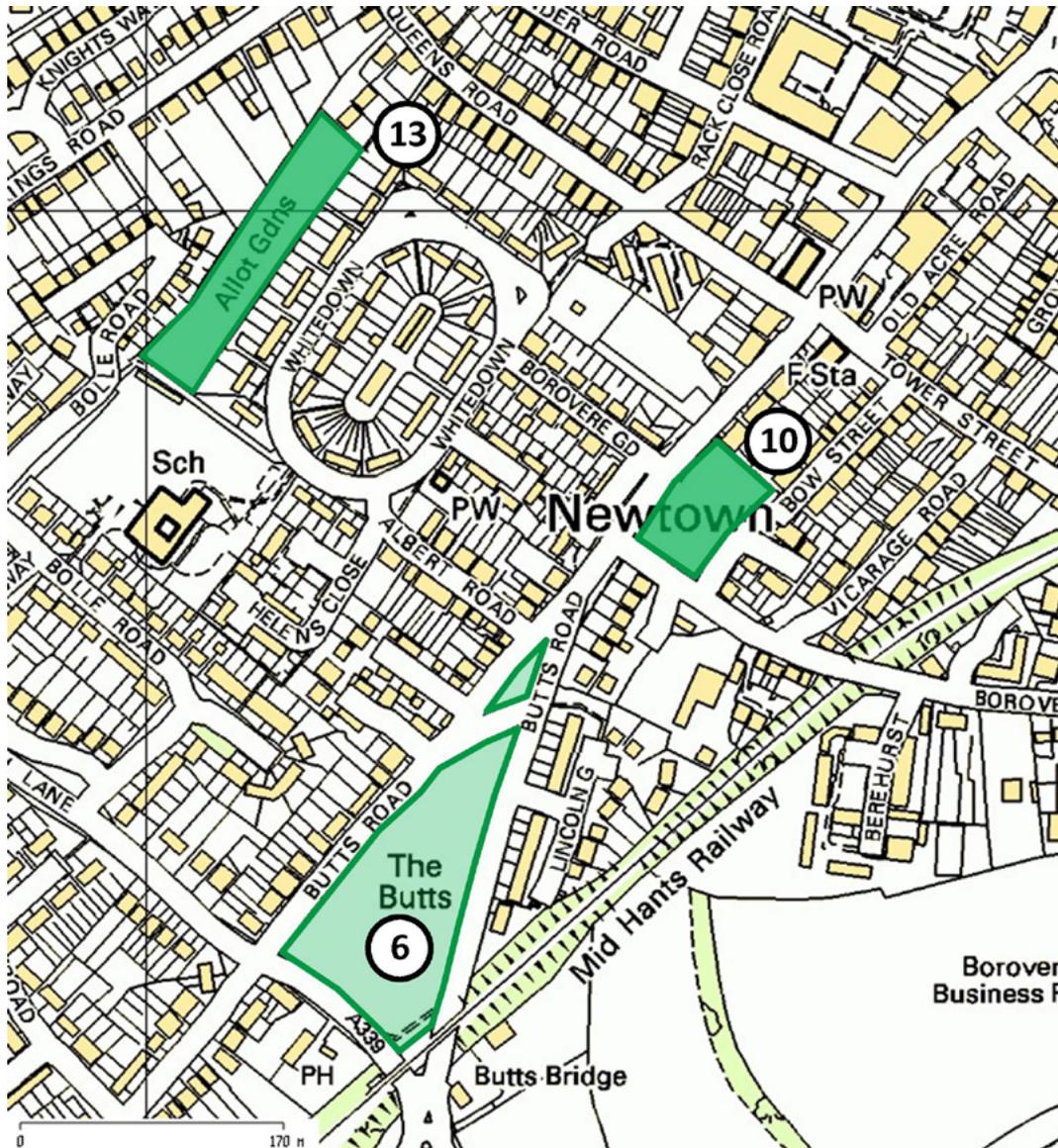
6. Plan policies - Community



5. King's Pond

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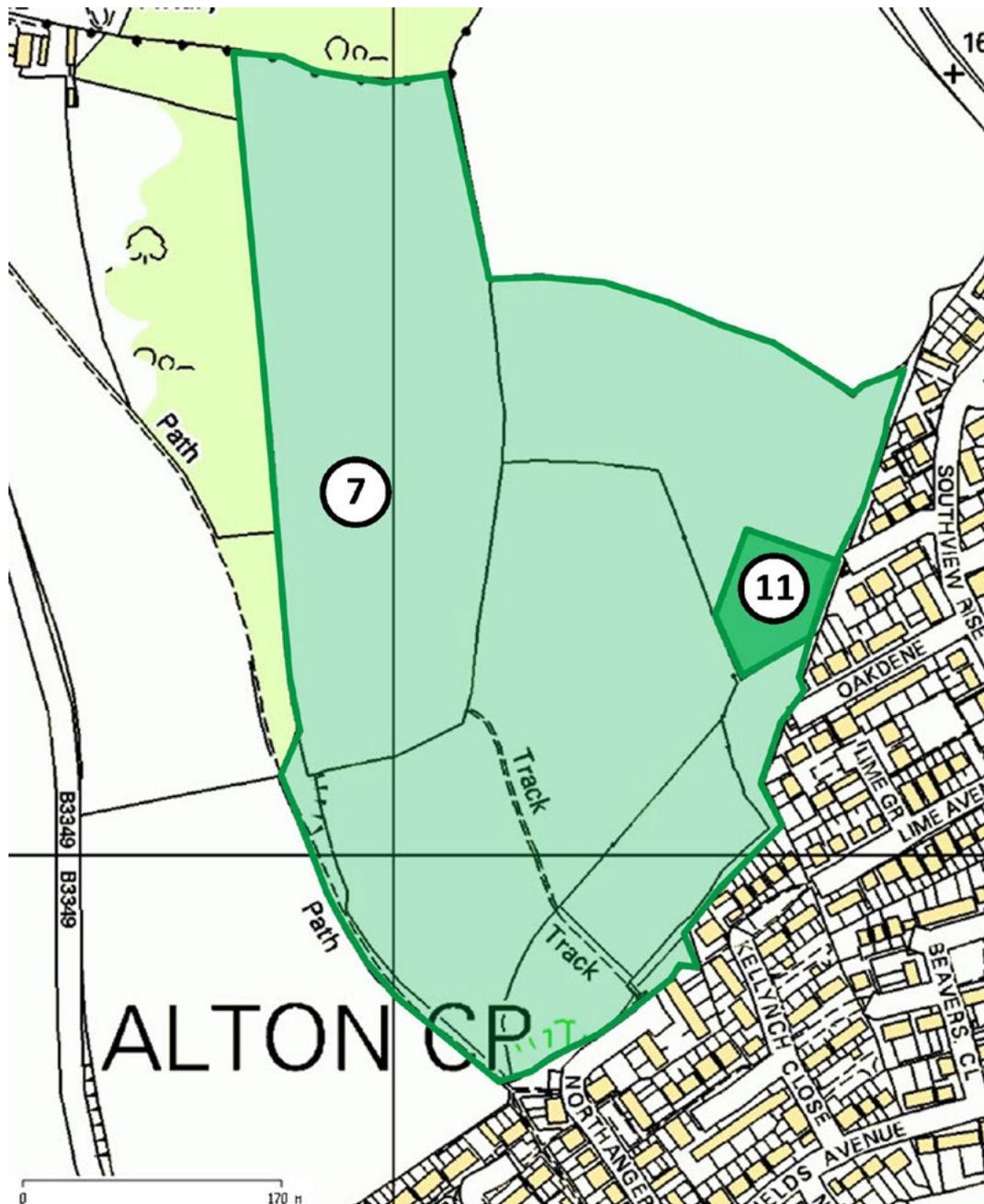
6. Plan policies - Community



- 6. The Butts Green
- 10. Borovere Allotments
- 13. Whitedown Allotments

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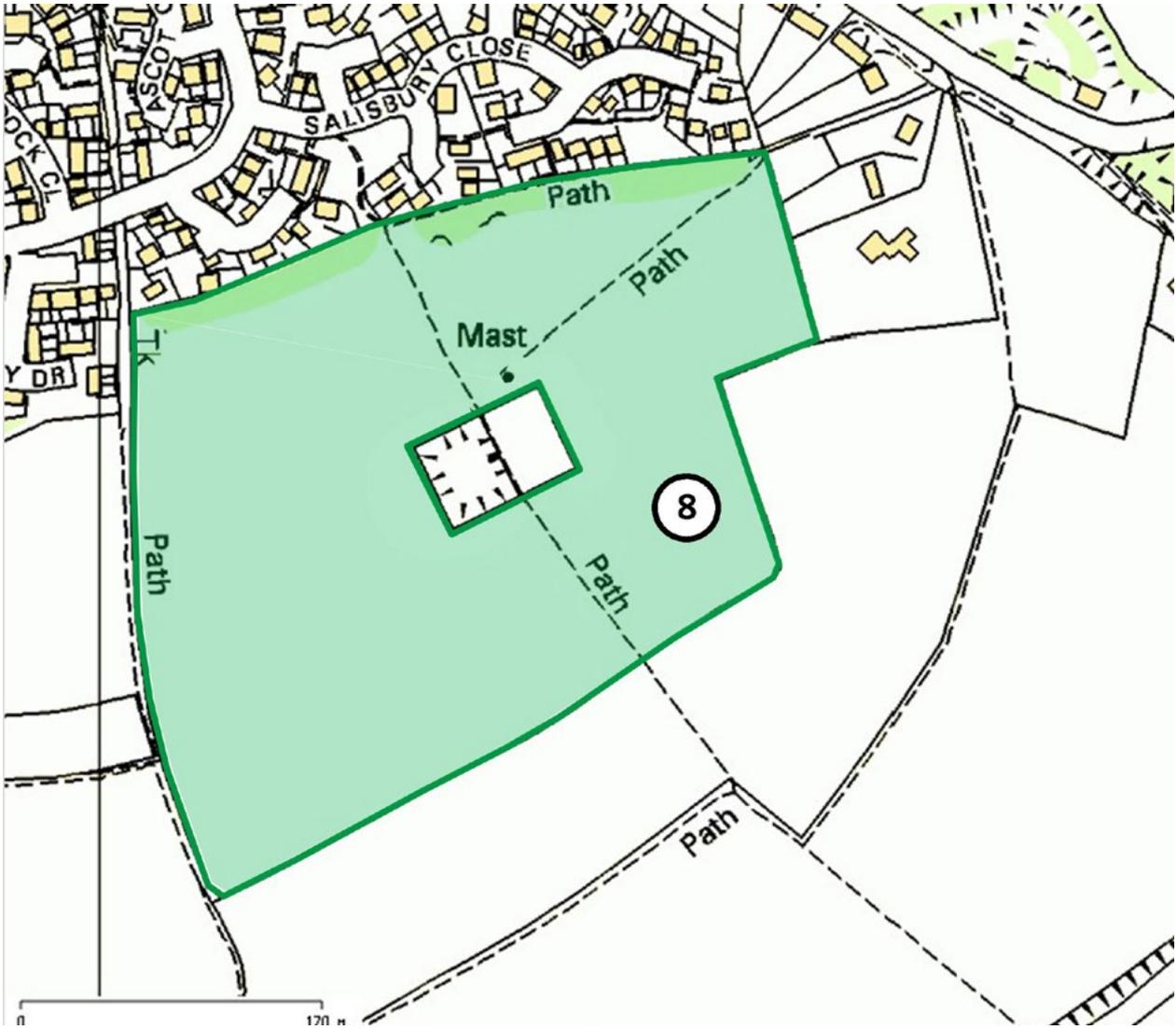
6. Plan policies - Community



7. Greenfields
11. Hawthorns Allotments

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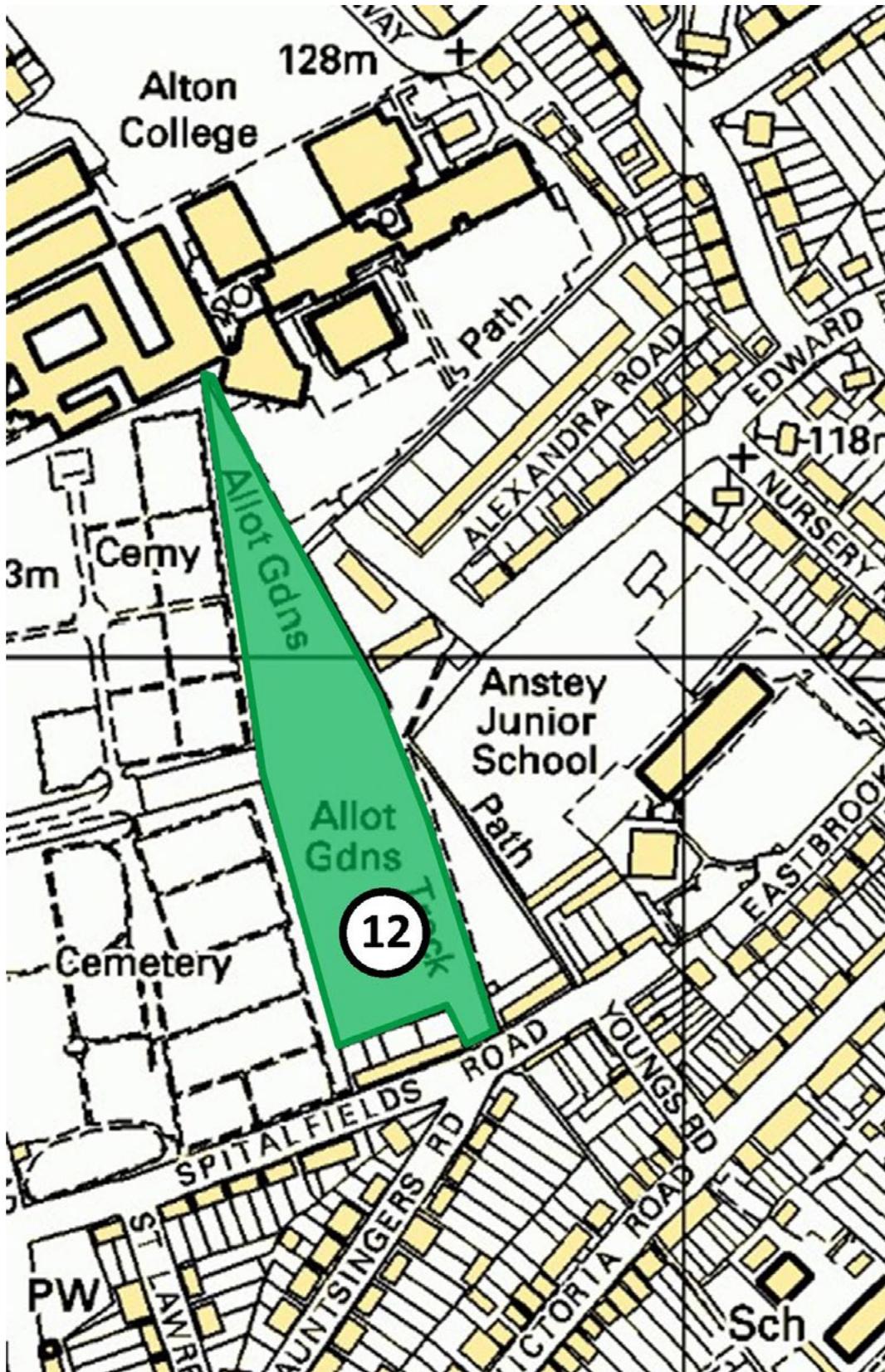
6. Plan policies - Community



8. Windmill Hill

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6. Plan policies - Community



12. Spitalfields/ Wooteys Allotments

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6. Plan policies - Community

CH5 Local green space and open space

The areas below, identified on the maps, are designated as Local Green Space, where development will not be permitted other than in very special circumstances:

- *Anstey Park;*
- *Alton Public Gardens;*
- *Alton Flood Meadows (to the rear of Lenten Street);*
- *Holybourne Play Area;*
- *King's Pond;*
- *The Butts Green;*
- *Greenfields;*
- *Windmill Hill;*
- *St Lawrence Churchyard;*
- *Allotment land (four sites at Borovere, Hawthorns, Spitalfields/Wooteys and Whitedown).*

Children's play areas

There are a number of children's play areas across the town. The *East Hampshire Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study* (2008) identified a modest shortfall in children's outdoor play space in Alton. Open space standards set out in that document are for there to be 0.25 hectares of children's or young people's space per 1,000 residents. It expects the provision for toddler and junior age groups to be available within 480 metres of all new dwellings. This can form part of wider public open space provision (at a minimum of 3.45 hectares per 1,000 population) which the *East Hampshire: Joint Core Strategy* expects. The *Green Infrastructure Study for East Hampshire* (2011) similarly recommended that additional children's play areas be created, especially in the northern, western and central parts of the town. In the Community Questionnaire over 60% of residents felt there should be more provision of children's play areas and many commented that this should be within or near to new housing developments. The issue, then, is accessibility to children's play areas.

This Neighbourhood Development Plan supports policy CP18 in the *East Hampshire: Joint Core Strategy*, which set out standards for the provision of open space, sport and recreation and built facilities, at new residential developments. It does so in accordance with the *National Planning Policy Framework*. CP18 supports the provision of well-designed, high-quality play spaces for children and young people, and it does so in a way which can be applied to differing circumstances at different development sites.

6. Plan policies - Community

This should help ensure that equipped play areas are available on or near to new housing developments. In some cases this may mean upgrading and/or increasing capacity of existing provision through developer contributions. In other cases it may mean new play areas being provided on site as part of a development scheme. Developer contributions, for an initial period of time, can help to ensure that play areas are properly maintained.

CH6: Playing fields

Justification:

Anstey Park is the largest area of playing fields in Alton. It has 1 cricket pitch, 4 rugby pitches, a rugby training area, 2 tennis and netball courts, and a football ground enclosure. Various sports and other clubs have leased sites for their premises within the park. Jubilee Playing Fields provides a further 2 cricket pitches and 5 football pitches.



Anstey Park is laid out with pitches for sport

6. Plan policies - Community

The *East Hampshire Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study* (2008) identified a notable shortfall in sports and recreation grounds at Alton, in particular for junior football pitches. The need for junior football pitches then appears as a 'priority' which is listed in the *East Hampshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan* (2013).

Intent:

Policy CH6 therefore supports the provision of new playing fields, particularly where they would be suitable for junior football. Where a development proposal includes new playing fields, this will be considered as a positive feature of that scheme.

CH6 Playing fields

Proposals to provide additional playing field space, especially junior football pitches, and associated facilities will be supported.

CH7: Allotments

Justification:

There are four existing allotment sites in Alton, which have 254 plots between them. They are at: Borovere (26 plots); Hawthorns (45 plots); Spitalfields and Wooteys (115 plots, including 3 special-needs plots and raised beds); and Whitedown (68 plots). There is a considerable and rising demand for plots as and when they become available. In December 2014 there was a waiting list of 63 for allotments in Alton. To mitigate this problem some plots have been subdivided. Additional growing spaces at the railway station and St Lawrence vicarage are provided under the Alton Local Food Initiative scheme.

According to the District Council's *Open Space, Sport & Recreation Study* (2008) there is some under-provision in Alton and the *East Hampshire Infrastructure Delivery Plan* seeks further allotments. Town growth will inevitably add to any existing demand. In the Community Questionnaire over half of residents wanted to see more allotments provided and a significant number of responses commented that new provision should be easily accessible from new housing developments. This matches the East Hampshire open space standards, which seek to have allotments accessible within 480 metres.

Intent:

Policy CH7 therefore supports the provision of new allotments associated with housing development schemes. Where a development proposal includes new allotments, this will be considered as a positive feature of that scheme.

CH7 Allotments

Proposals to provide additional allotment land in the town will be supported.

The action point for Alton Town Council which relates to this objective is:

CHAP5: We will seek to offer a co-ordinating role to local organisations in order to improve and promote the usage and financial health of the town's range of amenities.

6. Plan policies - Education

EDUCATION POLICY

Objective 4a: To support the provision of sufficient nursery, school and college places in Alton to meet the growing demand, in accessible locations.

ED1 Schools expansion

Justification:

Alton is a favoured centre for education serving a wide catchment. It has 9 preschools or nurseries, 1 children's centre, 7 primary schools, 2 secondary schools and a sixth-form college. The school roll at the town's primary schools was 1,458 and at its secondary schools was 1,639 for the 2013/14 academic year. There are 2 further independent establishments catering for the full school age range.



6. Plan policies - Education

Guidance from the Audit Commission considers a school to be full if it has less than 5% surplus capacity, so as to allow for parental choice. The *Hampshire School Places Plan 2013-18* forecasts that surplus capacity at Alton primary schools is reducing from 7% in 2013 and will disappear altogether by 2018, when there will be 1% undercapacity. Surplus capacity for Alton secondary schools is forecast to fall from 11% in 2013 to 9% in 2018. These figures were based on an assumption of Alton growing by 500 dwellings. Over the Neighbourhood Development Plan period that level of development is expected to be very considerably exceeded. It is also noted that population projections for East Hampshire District show a growing school-age cohort for the period to 2019. Discussions with schools in Alton supported this general picture and found concerns about future capacity.

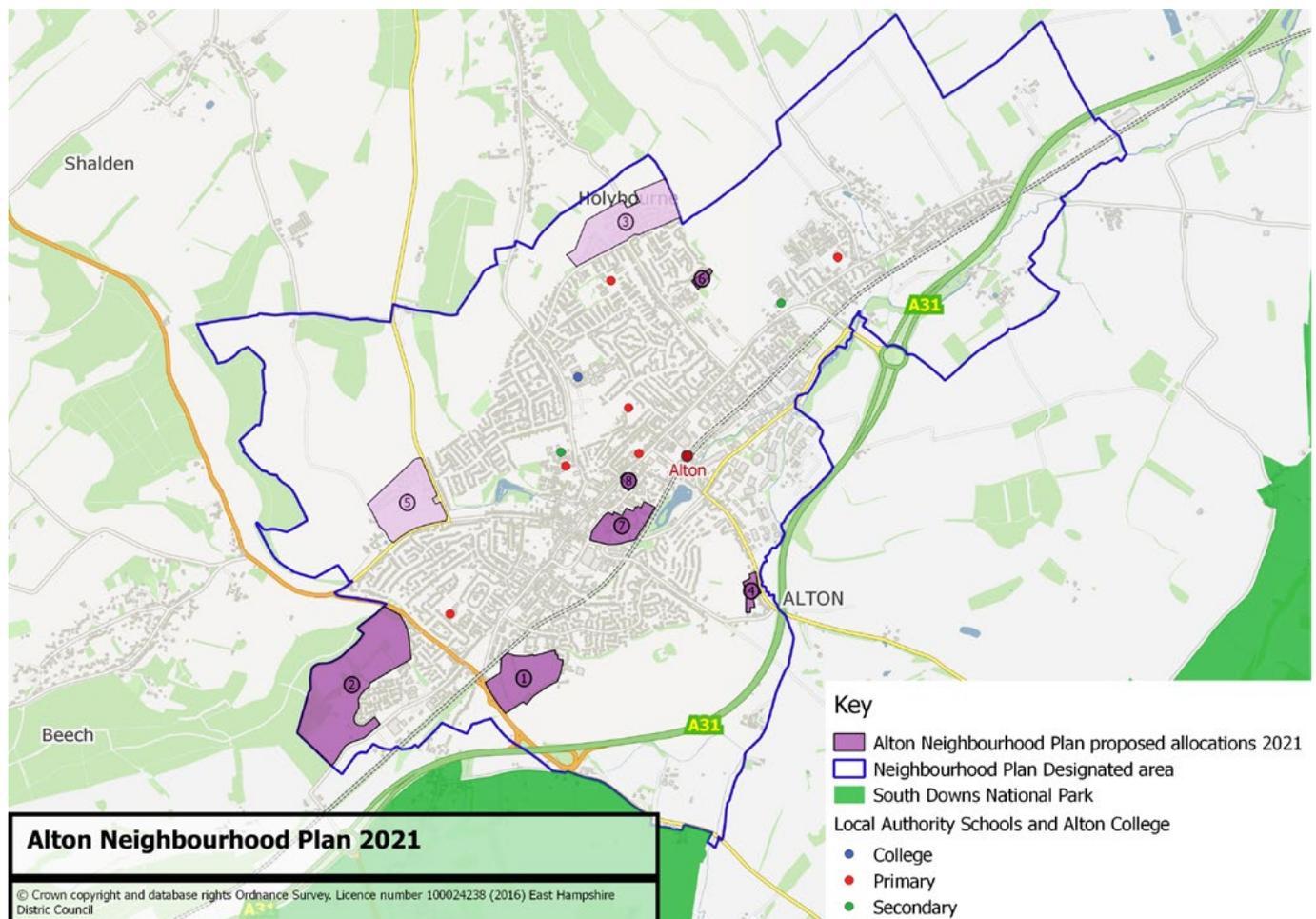
The Alton Community Questionnaire also identified similar widespread concern among residents, especially with regard to infant and primary schools.

The *East Hampshire: Joint Core Strategy* states that additional school places are likely to be required if the planned growth at Alton is to be accommodated. The County Council generally uses a threshold of 1,400 extra 'eligible' dwellings in an area, if provision of a new primary school is to be considered an option (a threshold which excludes one bedroom dwellings). Alton is expecting growth of more than 1,700 dwellings (of all types) during the Plan period, taking those already with planning permission and those with allocated sites. Other housing has been built since the last school extension was completed.

Mapping the location of Alton schools shows an uneven geographic distribution, with limited provision at the south-west end of the town. This is of particular note, given that allocated housing sites propose further development around the south-western periphery. The Community Questionnaire and the Youth Questionnaire found a strong desire for schools to be walkable from home, which sits well with the plan objectives to encourage walking and cycling, and to manage road traffic.



6. Plan policies - Education



Location of Alton's Local Authority Schools and Alton College

Intent:

The *Hampshire School Places Plan 2013-18* states that school provision in Alton is under review and discussion will take place with its schools about the best way to resolve the shortfall. The County Council's *Strategic Infrastructure Statement (2013)* lists the expansion of facilities at Wootey Infant and Junior Schools. These schools would be well placed to provide for children from households at allocated development sites on the north side of the town. We are at a critical time period for the provision of additional places and the County Council has opened discussions (late 2014) with The Butts Primary School about potential expansion at that site. It would be well placed to provide for some children from households in the south west of the town. Making best use of these school sites is desirable in order to reduce the need for cross-town journeys. They should maximise the potential for journeys to/from school being made on foot or bicycle. Policy ED1 therefore supports appropriate development proposals if they come forward at these two sites. It aligns with *Joint Core Strategy* policy CP14, whilst being more specific about the situation in Alton.

6. Plan policies - Education

ED1 Schools expansion

The proposed expansions of the Wootey Infant and Junior Schools and the Butts Primary School in Alton are supported provided they do not result in the significant loss of playing fields or open classroom space.

There are no current County Council proposals to fund a new school at Alton, though future growth could trigger a reassessment. Part 3 of the *East Hampshire Local Plan* will be considering longer-term planning requirements for schools across the District, including at Alton. The Town Council fully intends to engage with that process.

The action point for Alton Town Council which relates to this objective is:

EDAP1: We will engage with East Hampshire District Council when it considers future school (including a possible new school) requirements under Part 3 of the East Hampshire Local Plan. We will press for this to include extra nursery and pre-school provision in the town.

6. Plan policies - Economy

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY AND VIABILITY POLICIES

Policies under this heading seek to maintain and improve the economic viability and sustainability of Alton as a retail, service and employment centre. This will help ensure the future wellbeing of the town for residents, employees and visitors alike.

Objective 5a: To protect and enhance the role of Alton town centre as a retail, tourism and hospitality hub, which is vibrant and adaptable to future needs.

Town centre retail area

This plan recognises the high level of public concern regarding the future health of the High Street and its survival as a vibrant centre. However, this issue is best dealt with by action points, as planning policies cannot address many of the key issues.

The town centre serves as a retail and service hub both for the residents of Alton and for many others living in nearby settlements. Indeed, it is an historic market town and one of two main shopping centres within the district of East Hampshire. The importance of this role was recognised by the *East Hampshire Town Centres, Retail and Leisure Study* (2007) and is reflected in the *Joint Core Strategy* through policy CP8. The *District Council's Employment Land Review* (2013) noted that over a quarter of East Hampshire's retail jobs are located in Alton. That said, the town's role is a more localised one than that of retail centres at Basingstoke, Guildford and Winchester, which attract comparison shopping trips.

6. Plan policies - Economy

Alton town centre has 215 shop premises (classes A1 to A5), covering a reasonable mix of retail sectors, and with both national chains and independents represented. Some types of shop e.g. DIY/homeware, could however be considered as under-represented. There is also the popular weekly street market, which is held each Tuesday. As a hospitality centre, the town offers a good selection of pubs and a variety of restaurants, cafes and takeaway outlets. Although not a prime tourist destination, the town attracts a considerable number of visitors to local sites such as Jane Austen's house, the Watercress heritage railway line, the Curtis Museum and the Allen Gallery. It is a Gateway town to the nearby South Downs National Park and is attracting some stopover visits from passing travellers.

The Community Questionnaire found the key thing, by a large margin, which would lead residents to shop more frequently in Alton was having a better range of shops. There is a particular desire to see more small and independent retailers, and certain types of shop are felt to be in short supply e.g. DIY/homeware, electrical/white goods and quality clothes shops. Some respondents felt that charity shops were over-represented.

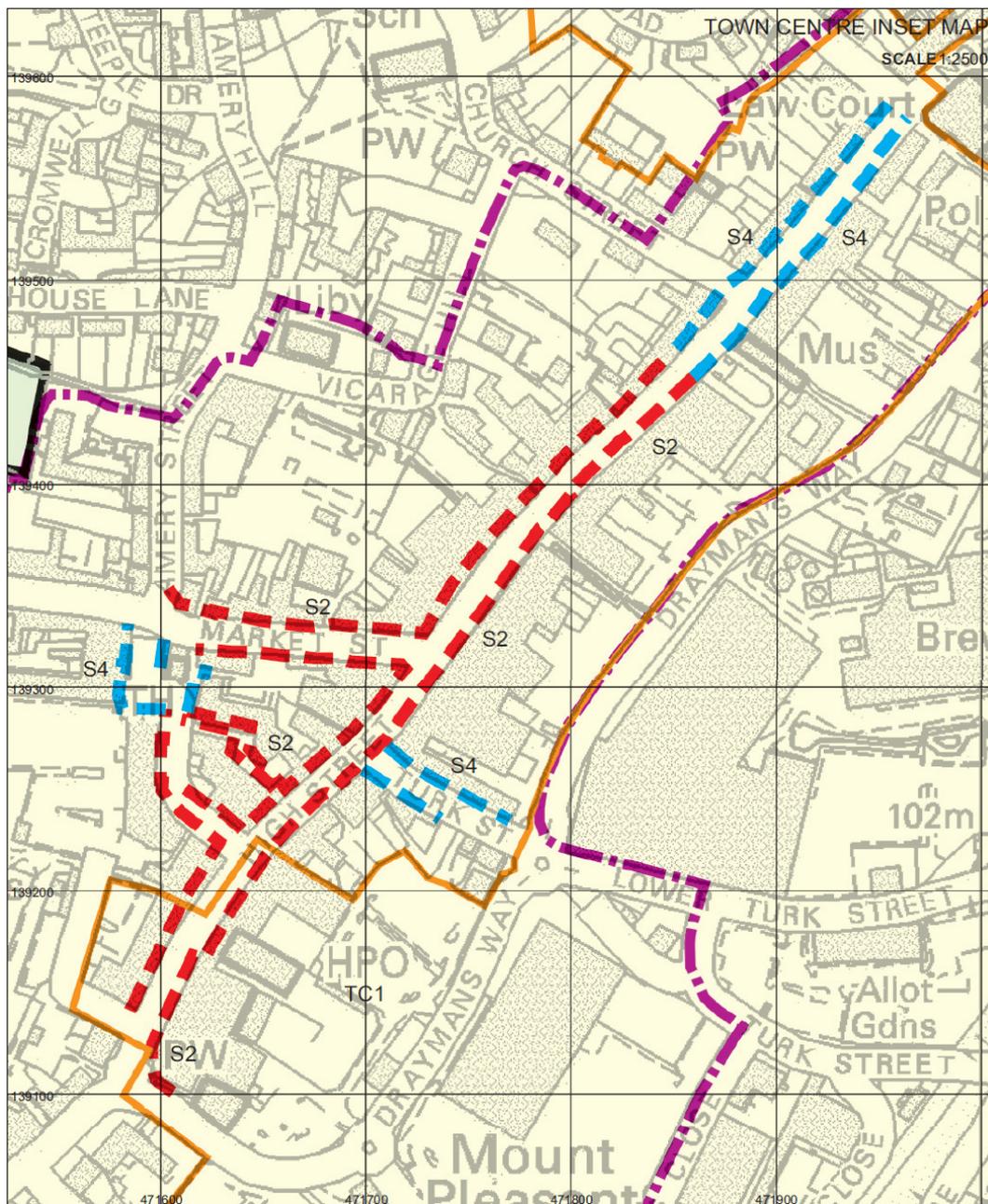
Some 32 of the 215 shop premises in the town centre were lying vacant in April 2014. At 15% the vacancy rate is slightly above the national average and considerably higher than it was at the time of the 2007 retail study. Whilst charity stores can play a valuable role, it is notable that 11 were recorded in 2014. In three cases shops which could be considered discount stores have moved into available premises. In common with a lot of towns, Alton needs to support the future of its high street. Town growth may help in that regard, though there are competing forces, such as out-of-town and internet shopping. It is probable that the town now has slightly more retail units than it can sustain. The *Town Centres, Retail and Leisure Study (2007)* noted that pedestrian flows are low to the more peripheral parts of central Alton.

Given changes in the retailing sector, which cannot be predicted with any certainty, a relatively flexible planning approach is required so that the town centre can adapt in ways which keep it viable and sustainable. This should seek to maintain the character of the town centre, whilst being responsive to future market needs. It may be appropriate for some secondary or peripheral shopping frontages, which lie beyond the primary or core area of the town centre, to change use in response to market conditions. This would have to happen within the framework of reserved policies S2 and S4 (on primary and secondary shopping frontages respectively) from East Hampshire's previous Local Plan, which is the current planning position.

A flexible approach should similarly be positive about permitting vacant larger retail units to be subdivided or converted into smaller retail units, if it can be shown that that is in line with market needs. Large premises which lie vacant and deteriorate can be particularly visible and detract from the appearance of shopping areas.

6. Plan policies - Economy

The existing definition of primary and secondary shopping frontages in Alton town centre is shown on the map below. This is due to be reviewed by Part 3 of the *East Hampshire Local Plan*. Alton Town Council wishes to engage with that District Council review to ensure the best outcome.



Zoning of Retail Premises in Town Centre (EHDC)
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 East Hampshire District Council

- - - Primary Shopping Frontage (S2)
- - - Secondary Shopping Frontage (S4)

6. Plan policies - Economy

Action points for Alton Town Council which relate to this objective are:

ESAP1: We will work with all interested parties to establish a Town Centre Management function in order to:

- market and promote the town to attract visitors and new business;
- co-ordinate leisure, entertainment and cultural events within the town;
- encourage town centre businesses to work together to enhance the overall retail offering;
- engage with tourism and hospitality providers in order to create a positive visitor experience;
- work with all local authorities to provide an attractive, clean, safe environment for visitors and local residents;
- work with all local authorities to ensure effective visitor infrastructure; accessibility, parking, signage (orientation & way-finding), tourist information and toilet facilities.



Maintaining an active shopping centre is vital to the wellbeing of the town.

ESAP2: We will work with landlords and the District Council to promote the development of flexible leases and other incentives to encourage new business start ups.

ESAP3: Owners and landlords of unoccupied high street property will be encouraged to maintain them in good decorative order and where appropriate to feature some form of window display.

ESAP4: We will engage with the District Council, when it reviews the defined primary and secondary shopping area boundaries of Alton under Part 3 of the Local Plan.

6. Plan policies - Economy

Objective 5b: To develop and enhance the business economy of Alton and Holybourne, to ensure that the town is economically sustainable.

Loss of existing employment land

Retaining and enhancing local employment opportunities – especially through good quality jobs – is seen as a core element of the future sustainability of Alton. Planning can play an important role in facilitating that. As well as allocating new employment land it can assist the retention and reuse of existing employment land.

Alton has two fair-sized, light-industrial estates, one at Mill Lane and another at Wilsom Road. Both of these are considered to be well located and fit for purpose. However, there are some vacant employment sites in the town and the local brewery (which occupies a roughly 5 hectare site in a fairly central location) has closed. Action Point ESAP9 covers the Brewery Site.

A district-wide report, the *East Hampshire Employment Land Review (2013)*, concluded that most of the area's businesses are long established, few premises become vacant, much of the premises stock is relatively old and (more positively) there are a good number of knowledge-based industries. The Business Survey for this Neighbourhood Development Plan identified a lack of suitable premises to rent, as well as a wish to see better transport links and broadband connectivity.

This Neighbourhood Development Plan supports the planning policy framework which is set at local and national levels. *East Hampshire: Joint Core Strategy* policy CP4 covers the loss of existing employment land, as does paragraph 51 of the *National Planning Policy Framework*. *Joint Core Strategy* policy CP2 encourages development to make best use of previously developed (or brownfield) land and buildings within built up areas, as does paragraph 17 of the *National Planning Policy Framework*. Whilst there is a wish to see available employment sites in Alton reused for that purpose, it is recognised there can be circumstances where alternative use (including the mixed use of sites) will be more realistic. Indeed, aside from the sites which are allocated at policy HO3, there is an expectation that the town's future development needs might be met on larger brownfield sites which become available.

6. Plan policies - Economy

ES1: Reuse of commercial brownfield land

Justification:

It is important for the economic viability of the town centre that a balance is maintained among appropriate uses and this will include commercial office space. Buildings which could make good office space are sometimes lost to other (perhaps higher-value) uses. Some of Alton's existing commercial office space can be considered poorly suited to modern business requirements. This may be due to it being in older buildings, perhaps over town centre shops and occupying relatively inflexible space. The Business Survey undertaken for this Neighbourhood Development Plan identified a wish to see more suitable rental premises. There are some former employment sites which have been lying vacant in or adjacent to the town centre, and which might be made suitable for reuse as commercial office space. Examples include the old post office, the magistrates' courts and (more recently) the brewery. Office development which is close to the town centre is more likely to be sustainable, providing occupants with easy access to a range of services and to public transport links. Providing new employment opportunities close to the town centre would help to sustain retail and service businesses located there. This would be consistent with policy CP4 in the *East Hampshire: Joint Core Strategy*.

Intent:

Policy ES1 therefore supports appropriate development proposals to reuse vacant or available buildings within the town as commercial office space. Such proposals would need to take proper account of other policies within this Neighbourhood Development Plan, including TR3 and TR5. They would also need to take proper account of policies in the *East Hampshire: Joint Core Strategy*, including CP29 which promotes good design in the built environment.

ES1 Reuse of commercial brownfield land

The reuse of previously developed employment land with alternative employment uses will be supported.

6. Plan policies - Economy

Action points for Alton Town Council which relate to this objective are:

ESAP 5: We will work with the Economic Development Team at the District Council to promote the town as an attractive location for business:

- identifying and targeting appropriate business sectors.
- attracting high technology businesses to the Town.
- establishing an Enterprise Centre to support business start-ups, providing business support services and flexible incubation space.

ESAP6: We will work to ensure that the business community is able to benefit from state-of-the-art communication systems such as high-speed broadband.

ESAP7: We will work with ACCI to maintain strong relationships between business and the local education establishments, to create a mutually beneficial environment where local career opportunities can be enhanced.

ESAP8: We will work with East Hampshire District Council and neighbouring Parishes to ensure that a minimum of seven hectares of land is available for economic development, in the form of business parks for both industrial and commercial use.

7. Going forward

Following its submission to EHDC, this Neighbourhood Development Plan was subject to some checks, a further District Council consultation, an independent examination and a referendum among local residents before it could be adopted as part of the statutory Development Plan.

Although adoption is a milestone, it is not the end of the process. Alton Town Council intends to engage with various organisations and support initiatives that will help to deliver the policies in this Plan. Equally, it intends to work with those who can implement other actions which technically fall outside of this Plan.

The Draft Local Plan

Further work on the East Hampshire Local Plan, led by the District Council, will have implications for Alton. Therefore, Alton Town Council (and, whilst it continues to exist, its Alton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group) will continue liaising with the District Council to influence that work.

The District Council is currently considering the scope of the Local Plan review in the context of the recent Planning for the Future White Paper consultation however it continues to anticipate its adoption in 2023.

Strategic Transport Study

There is expected to be ongoing dialogue with Hampshire County Council which, as the area's Local Highways Authority, commissioned a study to consider future road network needs of Alton, given the growth of the town. Alton Town Council will want to help inform decisions that are taken as a result of that study.

Monitoring

Alton Town Council intends to monitor progress with this Neighbourhood Development Plan on an annual basis. The production of the Plan has involved a very significant amount of time and effort by many local people, much of it on a voluntary basis. In addition to any statutory monitoring that will be undertaken by the District Council, the Town Council therefore wishes to track whether the Plan has a positive impact on planning decisions and whether its objectives are being realised.

Review

Alton Town Council intends to carry out a more substantial review of the vision, objectives and spatial strategy of the Modified Made Plan at an appropriate time in the future to take account of the reasoning and evidence base of the emerging Draft Local Plan. Not enough is known at present to inform and shape this review, hence a two-phased approach to modifying the made Neighbourhood Plan.

Acknowledgements

Membership of the Alton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was as follows:

Chairman and Lead on Housing:

Mike Heelis MBE

Deputy Chairmen and Leads on Community:

Councillor Peter Hicks (December 2013 to February 2014)

Councillor Graham Hill (March 2014 onwards)

Housing:

Brian Alexander (December 2013 to January 2014)

Mike Biddiss (February 2014 onwards)

District Councillor Nicky Branch (also Environment and Economic Sustainability)

Lead on Transport:

David Allan MBE

Leads on Economic Sustainability and Viability:

Sanya Ward (December 2013 to September 2014)

Andy Goodall (October 2014 onwards)

Lead on Health & Finance:

Councillor David Willoughby

Lead on Education and Communications:

Councillor Pam Jones

Assisting the Steering Group were:

Data analysis and presentation:

Charles Dixon

Minute takers:

Steve Parkinson, Town Clerk

Mark Rumsby

Sarah Bettin

Linda Munday

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The 2021 modifications have been prepared by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, comprising:

Councillor Graham Titterington (Town Mayor)
Councillor Pam Jones
Mike Heelis MBE
David Allan MBE
Nicholas Branch
Leah Coney (Town Clerk)

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