

## Acting Chairman's Remarks



Mike Heelis, MBE

I write this column at a hugely busy time for the Alton Society as many initiatives and proposals for change confront our town. It is my intent to briefly cover the most important of these here,

but a more detailed insight will be contained in various articles within. I would first like to thank the membership for being so willing to engage and guide the Committee on the important issues facing our town. This has been done not only by letters and e-mails, but by the excellent attendance at our AGM late last year, at the Core Strategy pre-public consultation review in February, and again at the TESCO meeting in early April.

Our engagement in the Core Strategy work which is part of the new and emerging Local Development Framework process being spearheaded by EHDC is essential. A significant number of Committee members are driving forces in the ATP Environment Group which is leading this work locally. It is obvious that Altonians are very concerned for the future of the town as witnessed on the 28 February when an unprecedented 400 local people attended the Public Consultation in the Community Centre. Thanks to all who made this a success and the attendees for providing such invaluable feedback which we will analyse and pass on in various updates.

At last the outcome of the South Downs National Park has been announced and, as suspected, Alton has been excluded, but Petersfield and some of our local villages are in. You will be aware that the Society put in a considerable amount of effort on behalf of the town to, at best, ensure that Alton was included and at least got the best possible deal if not. The Inspector's Report on the Society's submitted case was most complimentary. It remains to be seen how our District Council, administered from within the Park, can undertake business in an even-handed way with parts of the area within the Park and other parts not.

The Society fought to save the old Minnesotas building, which was of such historical importance to our town. We presented our case to English Heritage but it was rejected and the building demolished. Since then the Committee has been very busy commenting on and attending meetings in support of the Aldi proposal to build a supermarket together with housing on the site. Reassuringly we have been listened to and changes have been undertaken as a result of our observations.

It is now no secret throughout the town that TESCO intend to make an application to build and open a supermarket on the old Hampshire Commercials site at the end of Mill Lane. On 8 April the Society conducted its own consultation meeting with TESCO on this proposal and there was lively debate.

*continued on Page 9*

## PLANNING MATTERS

We try to explain where we have approved planning applications or not, and why.

**1 – 3 Butts Road** is an interesting scheme for 14 one-room flats for disabled people behind the BP garage in Old Acre Road. We welcomed this crisp modern design, which still allowed a view through from Butts Road to the terrace in Old Acre Road, and permission was granted by EHDC.

**Borovere Farm** The proposal was to change the use of farm buildings to storage and reclad them. The recladding will be an improvement. Borovere Lane is however narrow and so we supported EHDC's restrictions on traffic movements when they granted permission.

**The Old Maltings Building (former Minnesota's Nightclub) in Lower Turk Street.** We have no objection in principle to the supermarket or the proposed flats but we were strongly opposed to the demolition of the building, which was the last unaltered memento of Alton's historic brewing industry. It was high on our Local List, and is also referred to in the Town Design Statement, where it was recommended for Listing. Our campaign, very strongly helped by two of our local Councillors, succeeded in getting English Heritage to re-open their file on the building but we were unable to convince them to List it and so it has now been demolished by Aldi. Through site meetings and a public meeting with Aldi, the Town and District Councils and the Society, we have managed to influence the design which has been reduced in scale – a great benefit to the appearance along Turk Street and its effect on Culverton House. We have also achieved some improvement in the pedestrian access. The revised scheme was approved at the EHDC planning meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> April.

**Town Hall, Market Square.** It is proposed to erect a CCTV camera on the corner of the Town Hall, to which we have no objection in principle. However the plans did not show details of how the appearance of this prominent listed building in the Conservation Area would be affected. We registered our objection until such details were forthcoming and shown to be acceptable.

**27 Market Street.** Upstairs windows had been replaced many

years ago with uPVC frames, which was unsuitable for this Listed building. EHDC's conservation department have insisted that they be replaced with more appropriate timber-framed windows. We welcome such a positive response to the preservation of our built heritage. We had suggested that sash windows would have matched the originals and the neighbours instead of the present casement ones.

**Tesco, Mill Lane.** The proposed Tesco superstore at the Holybourne end of Mill Lane is a really significant event. It is a mark of commercial confidence in Alton, it could do much to improve that end of Mill Lane, and it might be a benefit to shoppers. However, we are concerned that, with Tesco's usual wide range of goods, it might be a severe threat to viability of the High Street. We have attended Tesco's presentations and arranged a meeting between them and our members. Should they come to Alton, we need to ensure that the building is of a high architectural standard – they recognize that it is at a gateway to the town – that the building and their policies are to high sustainability standards, that Mill Lane is provided with a frequent and reliable bus service linking the whole of Mill Lane to the town centre, and that necessary improvements are made to both ends of Mill Lane for increased traffic movements.

**Bell House Chapel, Turk Street.** The proposal was to change the use of this old Wantage Sisters chapel so that it could be used for weddings and other functions. In our opinion the necessary minor alterations to this Listed building were acceptable.

**Vicarage Hill.** A proposal has been submitted for a large block of flats on the site of the Brethren Meeting Hall and School, and the next-door house. They are overlarge and of an undistinguished style, not of the quality we would expect in this prominent site in the central Conservation Area. We understand that the plans have been withdrawn for reconsideration.

## BUILT ENVIRONMENT GROUP contd.

### The Local List

We have restarted our walks and completed the High Street. Therefore the only outstanding area is Holybourne which will be tackled in conjunction with some Holybourne residents. The latest work needs to be verified as usual by Nick Carey-Thomas (architecture) and Jane Hurst (history) before being passed to EHDC's Conservation Officer.

### Transport

After many months, during which HCC has sought clarification over safety matters, the proposals to move compressed natural gas (CNG) by lorry along Whitedown Lane on the way to Weston Common have now been approved. We had opposed this on traffic grounds and the likely delays to be caused by 12 articulated vehicles per day

at the Butts bridges and the road safety implications of more large vehicles on the Basingstoke Road. The concerns about safety of the CNG could not be sustained as the precautions taken are the industry standard ones that have been operated for many years without incident.

### Alton Community Association (ACA) and the new Community Centre

We have been monitoring the situation and understand that EHDC's Feasibility Study is now with EHDC and will be discussed with ACA and Holybourne Theatre Group early in May. We have offered the architectural and theatrical expertise within the Society to ACA to assist them in their planning. When the report is available, we will look carefully at the institutional, economic and architectural planning proposals.

*Edward Hepper*

## South Downs National Park

The Minister has now accepted the Inspector's latest report. Broadly, this involves reversion to most of the boundaries proposed in 2002-4, and therefore inclusion of the so-called Western Weald. As well as embracing a large proportion of the rural village areas of East Hants, the outcome includes Liss and Petersfield within the park. However, it continues to exclude Alton and much of the wedge from Alton to Farringdon and West Worldham. The ministerial decision is more helpful in restoring to the scheme the 'finger' of land which then runs northwards from Wick Hill via Binsted up to Bentley and thus acts potentially as a buffer against any full westward spread of expanding development at Bordon/Whitehill. The Minister has also made a new proposal (subject to further consultation) that the boundary might now be enlarged to include all of Alice Holt Forest.

'On-line' members can readily check the results in greater detail via the Natural England website.

The overall effect on Alton is likely to be that we will have to take rather more housing and industry than we might have expected. However, EHDC's reaction is not yet known.

The Inspector's previous report made particular reference to the very high quality of our original submission for Alton's inclusion – this was prepared on behalf of the Society and the Town Council by the late Tom Arnott. Just a shame that Petersfield's position surrounded by park gave it a slightly stronger case.

*Edward Hepper*

## LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK AND CORE STRATEGY

You will be aware that Alton Society Committee members make up a significant part of the ATP Environment Group which is spearheading this work. Since my last report to you we conducted a most successful Public Consultation in the Community Centre on 28 February. The intent of this consultation was to:

- Inform Altonians of the Core Strategy, its impact and how it is to be implemented,
- Seek opinions of Altonians on the following issues:
  - Which of the 3 EHDC proposed options for development would be best for the District and Alton,
  - The amount of additional housing that may be specified for Alton over next 20 years,
  - If additional housing will be beneficial or not,
  - Where, broadly, the additional housing can go,
  - What considerations should be made for the additional housing.

We had an unprecedented 400 attendees to this consultation and such was the interest that the introductory and explanatory explanation of the work had to be given four times instead of the planned twice. Since the Consultation we have received back nearly 200 diligently completed questionnaires for analysis. There was a genuine interest and desire to shape and guide what is being proposed for the Core Strategy for Alton out to 2026. From the government-specified 4,000 dwellings to be built in East Hampshire over this period, minus the 700 already planned and agreed for Alton so far, the group made a number of assumptions.

These had to take account, for example, of whether we are in or out of the SDNP (we did not know the result at that time) and which of the 3 EHDC options for distribution of this development will be adopted. Our outcome, where the option is set out first followed by our assumed possible impact on Alton, is as follows:

- CH1 Focus new development at the larger towns of Alton and Petersfield.
- On basis of pro rata for existing population, the result for Alton would be 2,145 minus 700 already planned making it 1,445 dwellings.
- But if the South Downs National Park went ahead, assume 50% reduction on Petersfield figures then for Alton 3,073 minus the 700 already planned would make it 2,373 dwellings.
- CH2 – Focus new development at Alton, Petersfield and modest amounts at other places (Liphook, Liss and Four Marks) to take advantage of existing services and facilities or to meet identified local needs.
- This option (the most likely) would result for Alton, on basis of pro rata for existing population, in 1,365 dwellings minus 700 already planned making it 665.
- If the South Downs National Park went ahead, assume 50% reduction on Petersfield figures then for Alton the figure would be 1,955 minus 700 already planned, making it 1,255 dwellings.
- CH 3 – Spread new development throughout central Hampshire area of the district to meet identifiable local needs.
- On basis of pro rata for existing population, this would result for Alton in 670 dwellings minus the 700 already planned, making it zero.
- But if the South Downs National Park went ahead, assume 50% reduction on Petersfield figures for Alton the figure would be 960 minus the 700 already planned making it 260 dwellings.

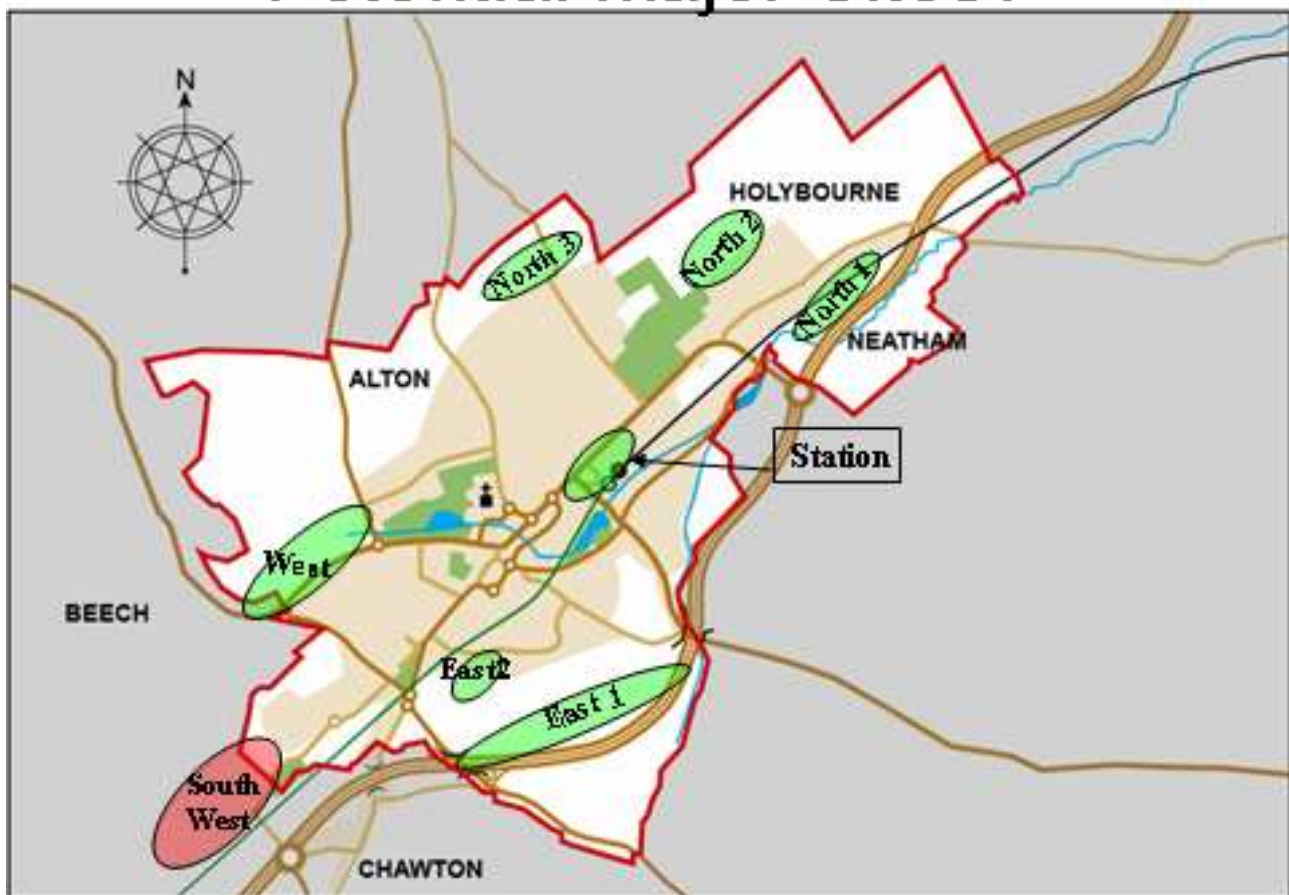
## LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK AND CORE STRATEGY

—contd.

In addition to the CH1, CH2, and CH3 options, a number of areas which would be compliant with the Alton Town Design Statement, should development take place there, were put forward in very general terms.

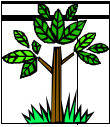
These are per the map set out below:

### Potential Major Sites?



A considerable amount of work is currently ongoing to produce the final report. This will be submitted in early May through the ATP to EHDC and hopefully used to shape the development of a Core Strategy for East Hampshire. It will also be posted on the ATP website (with links to it from the Alton Society website). Finally the most important finding of the Consultation was that the people of Alton want to be involved in any decision-making process which impacts Alton now or in the future.

*Mike Heelis*



## LITTER PICKING DAY—in partnership with Alton Youth Council

Beautiful Alton? Well, nearly.

Last Saturday, April 18th, volunteers from the Alton Youth Council and Alton Society, plus a small army of keen residents, set out to clear away the worst of the winter rubbish from Alton streets and alleyways.

By lunch time the rubbish sacks were overflowing, 13 trolleys had been returned to supermarkets and about 50 glass bottles fed into the recycling bin.

The litter pickers were astounded by the reality of what they found. “Bottles and cans were pushed into bushes and hedges, half eaten food is just dropped for rats and vermin and the smells were pretty ghastly” said resident Jackie Henderson. Nonetheless, after the morning’s work large areas of the town’s streets and footpaths ended up looking like a new pin. Surveying the achievements with satisfaction, James Willis remarked that “a lot of the rubbish we cleared away had obviously been there for a very long time. Having such a large and cheerful team made what would have been an impossible chore into something sociable and rewarding.” The free drinks for litter-pickers courtesy of Costa Coffee were particularly appreciated.

Katen Patel and his team of young people were brilliant in organising such an effective event. “It was fantastic this year. I think the better weather helped plus having the East Hants District Council (EHDC) trailer. It shows that people really care about wanting to keep Alton looking good. It’s probably only a few people that leave so much litter about, but I wish they wouldn’t. Thank you so much to everyone who helped at our annual Spring Clean.”

Other problems were un-earthed: rubbish is blown onto private land and sits there behind chain-link fences, just waiting to be blown back onto footpaths when the wind changes direction and some bins are over-flowing. The District Council carried out a survey of litter bins across the district recently and two extra bins have been placed in the High Street as a result.

Diana Wood was just one of several residents who regularly clean our footpaths and was willing to be identified as a ‘litter alert’ for her patch. “I have to say that I clear the alley near where I live, close to the Wey Bridge pub, every day and as soon as it is cleared more Subway bags, Domino cartons, drink cans and bottles once more appear. Sorry to say ‘that’s people for you’! Other residents are monitoring or collecting litter in Anstey Lane, Manor Estate, Queens Road, Ackender Road and Youngs Road up to the allotments. This is a tremendous effort and really appreciated.

Atul Patel, Alton Mayor and energetic supporter on the day, was kept busy explaining what sorts of plastics can be recycled. “People are still confused, although the recent bin labels aim to clarify some earlier leaflets.” Linda Horne, Project and Support Officer at EHDC confirmed that only plastic bottles are currently accepted. “Unfortunately, in common with most other local authorities, we do not accept plastic trays or packaging. East Hampshire District Council is part of the countywide Project Integra waste partnership and this takes a strong ethical stance on recycling so we work with reprocessors in this country and take the materials they require rather than sending them abroad where we do not know how they will be dealt with. Some manufacturers are now starting to reduce plastic packaging and replace it with cardboard which can be recycled”.

Joanna Davis, Project and Support Manager for Environmental Services at EHDC confirmed that a lot of rubbish comes from fast-food outlets. Joanna says “Our Streetcare Team will be taking tougher action this year in Alton, and will be working with fast-food retailers to remind them of their responsibilities”.

We look forward to hearing about their progress in the EHDC Partners magazine.

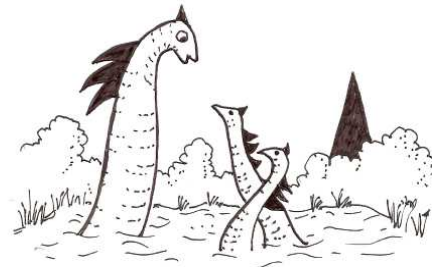
Do let us know your views and, more importantly, any solutions to how we keep Alton beautiful and clean.

*Chris Chappell*

**NATURAL ENVIRONMENT GROUP**

As spring is upon us, we are now seeking to make improvements and repairs to the pathways running throughout the watercress beds. The Town Council is kindly providing the materials required to carry out this work which will see the beautiful watercress area kept open for the public. There is much interest in helping with our work and we ask that you consider giving up 2 hours on the third Sunday morning of each month from 10:00 – 12:00 midday. All who attend enjoy meeting with other like-minded folk who just want to put something back towards the wellbeing of Alton.

*Mike Heelis*



“Don't forget, kids – when the Flood Meadows work-party appears, we always use the watercress for camouflage!”



Some of our Flood Meadows volunteers in action. Come and join them!



**CONTACT LINE  
FOR  
STRAY SAINSBURY'S SHOPPING TROLLEYS!  
Ring the store  
On  
01420 544252**

## MORE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT INITIATIVES

### TREES

We haven't often commented on applications to fell or prune trees in this column. However, since our last issue two cases of importance have come up and been commented on in detail by our Honorary Tree Warden, Jim Dickinson, to whom we are most grateful. At 10 Cross & Pillory Lane, the applicant wished to fell a tree in the forecourt. It contributes much to the street environment there and is capable of sympathetic pruning without felling. Alton Town Council accepted Jim's recommendations and EHDC refused permission to fell. More recently, an application was made to prune one of the Cedars behind Vicarage Hill. Again it is of great importance to the scenery of that part of the town and, so long as it is healthy, should be preserved. Jim's recommendations on the pruning that would achieve much of the applicant's wishes, while preserving the tree for Alton, have been submitted to Alton Town Council but there is no decision yet from EHDC. It is important that these cases are monitored to ensure that the pruning permitted is not exceeded, which can so easily happen when the contractors are on site.

*Edward Hepper*

### LANDSCAPE PLANTING

We have explored the Manor and Anstey estates and identified some possible sites for trees planting and the possible species. We have arranged a meeting with the local residents to agree with them the sites and possibilities. The earliest planting will be in the Autumn.

*Edward Hepper*

### ALTON SOCIETY AIMS:-

The aim of the Society is to improve Alton and its environment by:-

- (i) Stimulating interest in the past, present and future of Alton and district.
- (ii) Working for the preservation and enhancement of local features of particular historical, cultural or aesthetic importance.
- (iii) Promoting and encouraging the rational and appropriate development of the Alton area and its amenities.
- (iv) Acting as a focus for obtaining and giving relevant information and advice and to provide a forum for public discussion.
- (v) Representing and advancing the views of the Society on the said matters to the authorities concerned as well as to the wider community.

## NOMINATIONS, PLEASE!

### INDIVIDUAL AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICES TO THE TOWN

We need your nominations as soon as possible, but **at the latest by 31st July 2009**, to Edward Hepper—Uplands, 61 Queens Road, Alton, Hants, GU34 1JG, or by e-mail to [ejhepper@btinternet.com](mailto:ejhepper@btinternet.com).

A reminder of the two main criteria:

- To acknowledge the personal contribution made by an appropriate individual towards work, voluntary or otherwise, that has been of outstanding value to the Alton community. For this purpose, the Committee believes that ‘services’ should be interpreted in a very broad sense, so as to recognise a record of achievement related to one or other of the Society’s principal aims (see page 8).
- The rules restrict nominations to those outside and not related to members of the Committee.

2007 winner: Luath Grant Ferguson

2008 winner: Jane Hurst

## Acting Chairman’s Remarks—*continued from Page 1*

After the TESCO representatives had left, a vote was taken to find out whether members were in favour or against their proposal and, surprisingly, the outcome was effectively an even split for/against. Since then a draft Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis has been put together and this will be maintained throughout our monitoring of the application’s progress. Rest assured that your Committee will leave no stone unturned to ensure the best possible outcome on this application. Indeed we understand that there are other leading supermarkets investigating the possibility of coming to Alton.

In addition to the Tree Planting project to improve certain areas within Alton, the Committee has launched another initiative entitled “Improving the Appearance of Alton”. A list of eyesore areas has been drawn up and a coordinated and ongoing strategy of lobbying has been initiated to try and ignite some action from the relevant bodies.

We are working to ensure that the Alton Society website that is currently integrated with that of the ATP becomes part of the new Alton Connect family of websites to be spearheaded by Alton Initiatives Management. This will give single-click access to the Alton Society site through a general Alton website gateway.

In addition to the foregoing your Committee continues to undertake other important activities. Not the least of these is to engage with and contribute to planning applications, annual awards, Flood Meadows coordination and the important routine of efficiently running the Society, which is a Charity. We welcome inputs and contributions from members to guide our thoughts and also hope that you will all spread the word of the good work we do by encouraging others to join. (Details on the back page.)

*Mike Heelis*

*Acting Chairman*

## Join the Alton Society Now - have a say and a role in the future of our town

The membership subscription is £10 per household from 1st October.

Ask for a leaflet for its standing order form and to agree to the subscription being treated as Gift Aid.

Contact our Treasurer: Jan Nicholas, 10 Barton End, Alton, GU34 1LD.

Tel.: 01420 88411. E-mail: jnich1515@aol.com

*For existing members who already pay by standing order, please note that if you have not done so already, you need to instruct your bank to increase the amount payable to £10. Thank you.*

### CONTACT DETAILS FOR MEMBERS

#### CHAIRMAN—currently on rotation:-

Mike Heelis MBE (March—May)

01420 544176

James Willis (June—Sept)

Nick Carey-Thomas (Sept—Nov)

#### Treasurer & Newsletter Editor

Jan Nicholas 01420 88411

### OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS:-

Norman Isham OBE

01420 542114

Chris Chappell

01420 544422

Jerry Cullum

01420 543881

#### Built Environment

Edward Hepper

01420 544176

Mike Biddiss

01420 543132

Brian Alexander

01420 549552

James Willis

01420 83416

Nick Carey-Thomas

01420 82195

#### Alton Town Partnership Liaison

Mike Heelis

01420 82780

#### Natural Environment

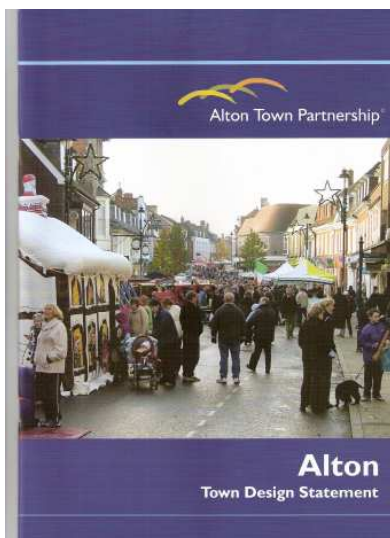
Mike Heelis

#### TREE WARDEN:-

Jim Dickinson

01420 84729

(a members-only consultation service)



## Town Design Statement

- a truly impressive document

Remember - you can obtain a copy

(these are free from the Town Hall

or can be viewed on [www.alton-in-partnership.org](http://www.alton-in-partnership.org))