

alton now

WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE FUTURE OF ALTON



NEWSLETTER OF THE ALTON SOCIETY

WINTER 2025



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welcome

Alton Now, the newsletter of the Alton Society, is normally published three times a year. We welcome articles, letters, poems and images pertaining to our town and its environment, so if you have anything to share for the next edition, do get in touch. Please note that the views of individual contributors to the newsletter are not necessarily those of the Alton Society.



From the Chairman

By David Simpkins

In this issue of our newsletter, we're looking forward to our AGM on the 15th of November at 11:30am at Alton Maltings. I do hope as many as possible of you will be able to join us for what is hoped to be an informative and, above all, sociable opportunity to meet other members and hear interesting speeches on issues that affect our town and the people in it.

Little has changed regarding the warnings we have all received concerning proposed new housing developments in the Alton area. The Society remains alert and ready to respond in the interests of the community and in order to achieve the best style, infrastructure and design for those developments, including as much affordable housing as possible.

Together with the Alton Building Preservation Trust, we attended the recent Heritage Day at the Assembly Rooms and it was a real success. Clearly, within the community there is a significant interest in the history of Alton, which, as we know, is rich and very varied. The Trust has produced an impressive illustrated booklet depicting some of the historical buildings in Alton with detailed information on their construction and use over the years.

You will all be aware of the recent cost of living increase, and it is some time since the Society's membership fee was established. After very careful thought, the committee has had no alternative but to recommend that while the membership fee for 2025-26 will remain the same, the fee should be increased by a very modest sum to £15 per annum from 2027-2028 onwards. We have looked at our financial projections carefully and that increase, together with minor reductions in the costs of running the Society, will ensure its very solvent continuance for some years to come.

We have a new website, which has been welcomed by all. To achieve this, we benefited from the expertise of Steve North of Go2North, who helped us create an attractive, accessible and friendly window into our activities and community support. I extend my thanks to those on the committee who are far more comfortable with IT issues than I, and who provided the input to Steve to achieve such an excellent result.

The Natural Environment Group continues to carry out regular continuous maintenance and repair work at Flood Meadows and all of us enjoy the photographic images of this on our website and Facebook.

As always, one of the messages I pass on every year is that the Society can only act in accordance with the strength of its committee and continued membership funding. If any of you reading this newsletter wish to participate in any capacity, either on the committee or as a volunteer, not on the committee, then please do make contact.

Thank you for your continued support. I look forward to seeing as many as you as possible at our AGM.

Annual General Meeting 2025

**Saturday 15 November - 11.30am - Tyndale Auditorium,
The Maltings, Alton, Hants GU34 1DT**

Dear Members & Supporters

**We look forward to welcoming you
to the Tyndale Auditorium at the
Alton Maltings for our 2025 AGM**

The event will include

- Presentation of the Outstanding Services Award
- Guest Speakers - Tom Horwood, our Town Clerk,
Councillor Ginny Boxall, Paul Ebbutt,
Robyn Harris from Alton College
- Tribute to Jane Austen by the Ancora Choir
- Refreshments including buffet, wine, water, and beer from Triple fff

Please let us know you're intending to attend. Email: info@altonsociety.org.uk
Do bring a partner or friend if you'd like to.

Thank you for your invaluable support which allows us to continue with our work.

The Alton Society



HAVE YOUR SAY IN THE FUTURE OF OUR TOWN

Email us
thealtonsociety@gmail.com

Follow us
 [@AltonSociety](https://www.facebook.com/AltonSociety)



Energy Alton and Caker Stream Solar Farm

In 2024, Energy Alton were asked to work with Community Energy Pathways and Energize South Downs on a proposal for a solar farm between Farrington and Selborne.

The farm land borders the Caker Stream, and is low-grade farming land, outside the South Downs National Park, in an area designated by NHDC as suitable for Solar Farms.

The proposal is for a 44MW solar farm and a co-located battery energy storage system. It covers 160 Acres of Solar, enough to generate clean power for the equivalent of c15,000 homes for 35 years.

The scheme is currently pending consideration with East Hants District Council with a decision expected later this year. Energy Alton have been liaising between the developers and residents of Farrington, Selborne and Worldham. So far this has resulted in the height of the panels being decreased to 3 metres, reconsideration of the construction traffic plan and increases to the

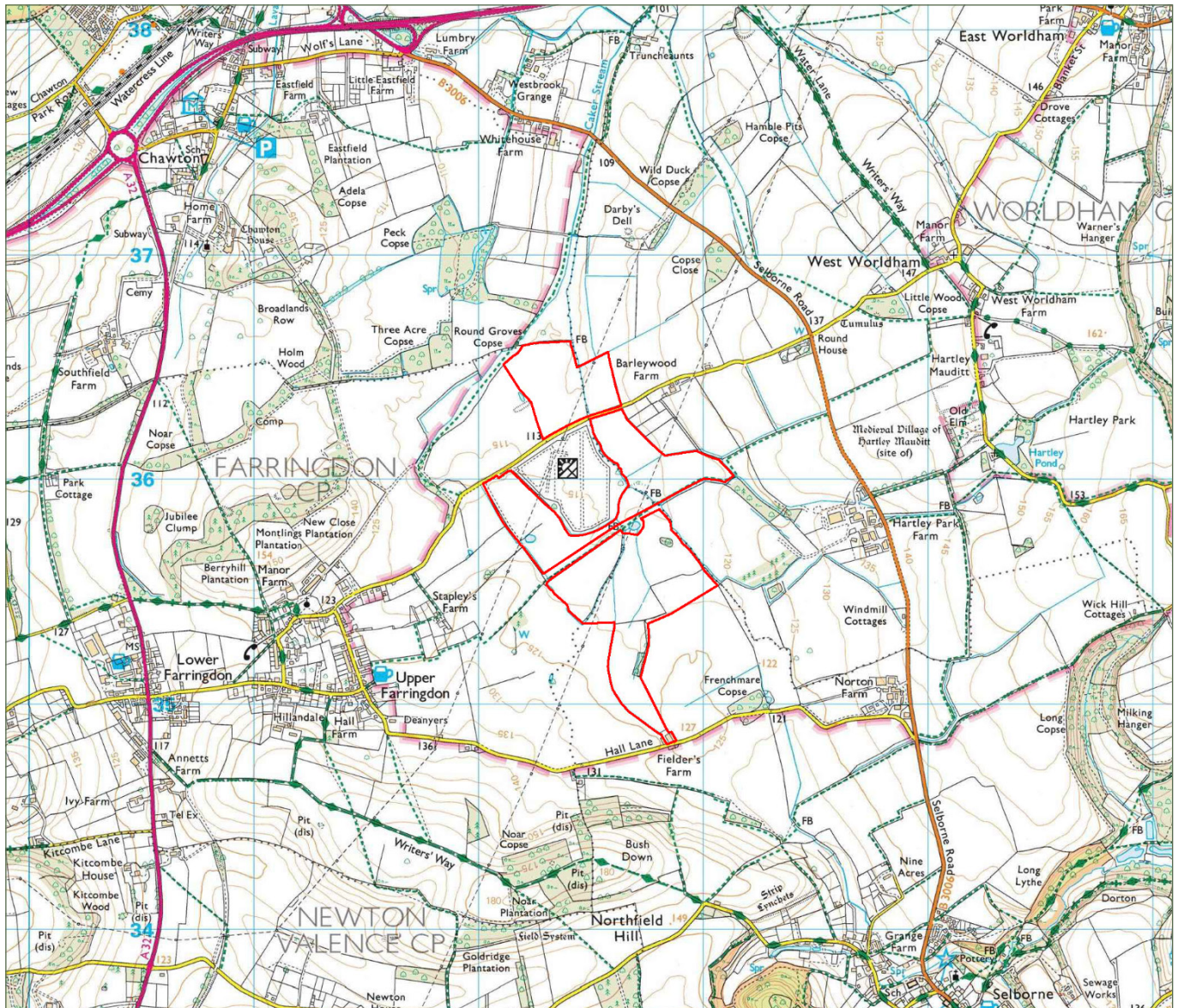
hedgerow planting, strengthening biodiversity and providing further shielding.

Due to the way the development is being approached, the local community will be able to own part of the project, contribute to decisions about the project, and benefit directly from it if it performs well.

The Shared Ownership model is widely used for wind farms in Scotland, but this will be one of the first solar farms of this scale that is implementing it in England – making it highly innovative and exciting.

The proposal is groundbreaking in its desire to include 10% community investment.

In addition to the community investment, there will be a community fund. This will produce an annual



fund based on £450 per MW generated and is expected to deliver around £20,000 per year. This money will be allocated to local energy efficiency projects in the Farringdon, Selborne and Worldham parishes.

Energy Alton are leading the engagement with the local community, visiting Parish Council meetings and providing local feedback to the developers during the planning application stage. We will ensure the community has an ongoing positive influence on the development and will also be working with the developer to manage the community benefit fund.

You can find more information on the development by visiting the website **www.cakerstreamsolar.co.uk** or by scanning the orange QR code.



More details on the planning application can be found on the **East Hants planning portal** under the reference **EHDC-25-0716-FUL**

Sign up to the Energy Alton newsletter to receive updates or let us know if you would like to volunteer to be more directly involved in the project. Energy Alton website is **www.energyalton.org.uk** or scan the green QR code.





Next year's event promises once again to be an exciting celebration of the positive power of the arts, community and creativity. It will showcase local talents and feature a variety of events and interactive workshops – all taking place in local venues in and around Alton.

The team are working hard to finalise the line-up for next year's Festival, which will bring exciting, engaging and inclusive experiences to our town. Favourites like Party in the Park and local music and comedy performances will return, joined by a variety of new workshops, gigs and experiences. To keep up to date on news, acts and ticket sales, you can visit www.altonartsfestival.com/get-in-touch to sign up and subscribe to the AAF newsletter.

Building a legacy in our schools...

Run entirely by volunteers, the Alton Arts Festival would not be possible without the generous support of the community and local organisations. Alton Society's donation helped to fund the 2024 festival's hugely successful schools programme which reached 3,000 students across 15 of Alton's Primary Schools and two secondary schools and empowered engagement between the town's artistic and educational communities.

Last year's programme featured creative workshops from seascape painting to African drumming. Artful Scribe's writing sessions culminated in students presenting their work at AAF's poetry showcase, while free wellbeing programmes like Flip Theatre and Yo Chi helped pupils use creativity to manage their mental health.

If you haven't already, be sure to mark your diaries for 3-12 July, as Alton Arts Festival returns in 2026!

Jo Eyres, Head of St Mary's Bentworth CE School and chair of the Alton Heads cluster, said:

"Alton Arts Festival is a very special community event. It is a celebration of everything creative and all that is wonderful about being human on this great earth. It is even more special for schools, as we highly value the arts and our environmental stewardship. The budget crisis in schools means that when amazing people get together and put on amazing events like this, giving our children a truly creative curriculum, we are enormously grateful."

Thanks to its success, next year's schools programme will reach even more schools, with 18 primary and secondary schools already signed up to take part. It will run ahead of the festival week – from 1-5 June – which will give the AAF team time to collate all the wonderful work the children produce to exhibit online and across festival venues in July. The ArtBox space will also make its debut next year, providing a dedicated space to hold creative art-based activities with local artists for pre-school children as well as workshops for homeschooled students.

3-12 JULY 2026

www.altonartsfestival.com



...and in the community

In addition to the Schools programme, the 2024 Alton Arts Festival helped bring together the creative community, bolstering Altonians' appetite for ongoing artistic experiences – ranging from workshops to comedy and music nights to poetry and open mic evenings. Originally held as part of the first AAF, Life Drawing classes still take place monthly at the Alton Community Centre and have built a loyal following.

Next year's festival will continue to build on this legacy throughout the town, providing enriching, interactive and fun art and cultural experiences for everyone to enjoy.

Support AAF – become a patron

Alton Arts Festival prides itself on being inclusive and open to everyone and ticket sales alone can't cover the costs of staging such an ambitious programme. To help keep the festival vibrant and ticket prices

as low as possible, the team is launching a patron scheme, which has already won the support of Alton Society alumnus Robert Booker and member Helen Dudley CBE.

The three-tiered programme offers the opportunity for individuals to invest £50, £250 or £500+ in the future of the arts in Alton with every pound going straight into funding Alton Arts Festival and its legacy.

Each tier includes benefits ranging from the donor's name on the website and digital pdf of the full programme, to advance ticket sales, priority seating, welcome drinks and the opportunity for a meet and greet with selected artists. To learn more about becoming an AAF patron, you can visit:

www.altonartsfestival.com/patrons

or contact Kat Guenioui at
info@altonartsfestival.com





DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday 21 November: Christmas Lights Switch-On

AAF will be running Christmas crafts during this town-wide celebration.

Come along and see what they are making and learn more about the 2026 festival.

Saturday, 20 December: AAF Christmas Concert, St Lawrence Church, Alton

Step into the warm glow of St Lawrence Church on a crisp winter evening for an enchanting night of music, words, festive wonder and a few surprises – all in support of AAF 2026! For programme details and to buy tickets, please visit: www.wegotickets.com/sct/zuJqVAv8Rt

1-5 June 2026: Alton Arts Festival Schools Programme

3-12 July 2026, venues across Alton: Alton Arts Festival

Sign up to our newsletter to learn about new acts, workshops and events as they are announced: www.altonartsfestival.com/get-in-touch

12 July - Alton Public Gardens: Party in the Park

Celebrate the end of the festival at Party in the Park. Bring a picnic or enjoy the range of foods and drinks available, enjoy free concerts and soak up the atmosphere with your fellow arts-loving Altonians.



www.altonartsfestival.com

3-12 JULY 2026

Autumn Litter Pick



Another successful town litter pick took place on Saturday 11 October, which was also the date of Alton's popular farmer's market and Alton Craft Market.

Thanks go to the Alton Guild of Optimists and ACAN for supporting this bi-annual event, which never fails to leave the cigarette-butt strewn streets of Alton looking a lot cleaner and fresher than they were previously. The kind weather enabled a great turnout by friends and colleagues in the town.

Make sure you look out for the Spring Litter Pick in March 2026.

The next Alton Society / Guild of Optimists litter pick will be confirmed soon. In the meantime, if you're interested in helping clean up the town, join the **Alton litter picks** group on Facebook for details of upcoming dates.





Paul's Poor Parking

By Paul Ebbutt

At the risk of inviting toxic abuse on social media and inviting everyone to scrutinise my parking skills from here to eternity I invite you to consider a problem I have to live with.

I dislike poor and inconsiderate parking.

Why do some people have to make life a little bit more difficult for others?

Why would someone park across a dropped kerb — an element of highway design that is installed to specifically enable prams, trolleys and wheelchairs to cross roads?

Why do some people think that parking with all four wheels on a footpath is OK? Hang on, isn't a footpath for pedestrians?

Delivery drivers seem to think "Oh it's OK to block a street or a footpath for a few minutes — I won't be long..." No, it is not OK — it's a blinking nuisance. Why can't you park with consideration for others and perhaps add a few more steps to your daily step count?

Builders have to make deliveries — I am not happy, but yes, I get it and yes I have had building works. But it is really helpful and appreciated when we, the

street users, are given reasonable warning. Wholesale closures with no warning ("I've got a job to do so you lot can just get out of the way until I'm done") is not acceptable! Required roadworks and railway works need planning consultation and engagement so why should these builder guys get away with their lack of planning?

Double Yellow lines — I desperately try to avoid these. Earlier this year someone parked on double yellow lines outside the Grape Tree health food shop in town, which brought the High Street to a halt for an hour and meant buses could not turn into Turk Street. So buses were diverted and appointments were missed as people waited in vain at the High Street stops.

Recently on Linnets Way (Wooteys estate) a rogue car has been 'parked' outside private homes on the pavement on double yellow lines for months. I feel so sorry for these residents of Alton. Efforts to have it removed have taken far too long — why does it take so much time to sort this out? It's just not acceptable. There! I feel a bit better for that.

What am I going to do about it? Alas, probably nothing. It's just too much hard work and I don't need the personal 'attacks' that could emerge from this rant... All I ask is that we all spread the word that considerate parking is generally appreciated.

Letters to the Editor



Dear Editor,

Dare you take on the 'death run'?!

I'm not one for the adrenaline of theme park rides, but at least they've been through stringent health and safety checks before the public use them.

I'm even less of a fan of what appear to be — from experience — dangerous public highways which could/should be addressed. And from talking to others, I am not alone. What am I referring to? It's been nicknamed by some in the NW part of Alton the 'death run' — the 20 metres of very narrow pavement alongside the Basingstoke Road between Brick Kiln Lane and Will Hall Farm. It forces the public into dangerous proximity to vehicles on the also narrow and very busy Basingstoke Road. The legal on-road clearance requirement for a vehicle passing a cyclist is 1.5 metres. The 'death run' offers nothing like this.

The 'death run' is bordered on one side by a low brick/flint wall, mature trees, vegetation, a lamppost and a telegraph pole. To avoid these, pedestrians / cyclists have no option but to use the outer edge of the narrow path — right next to the road. 'Elbow room' is dangerously restricted. It's even worse if you are trying to negotiate this section with a pushchair, are supporting anyone with mobility restrictions or using a wheelchair. Among residents I have spoken with, the most common method of navigating this stretch is to play the waiting game for a gap in the traffic and then dash along the path before the next car, van or lorry zooms past right by your ears. For some, even that is not an option. They are simply unable to move fast enough. In recent weeks I have also observed wheelchair users on the road in this area with a tailback of vehicles behind them. I do not know precisely why they are using the road, but one might conclude the narrow pavement does not assist.

In all, the current situation with unsafe and restricted accessibility of the path to some users could be discriminatory under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty requirements. It'd be interesting to understand if an Equality Impact Assessment or a Health & Safety audit has ever been undertaken on this location.

I've heard that the 'death run' should have been addressed when the Will Hall Farm estate was built in 2004-5. I understand planning permission was granted and required the widening of the pavement for walking / cycling along the full road frontage up to Brick Kiln Lane. The evident question, therefore, (assuming what I have heard indirectly is accurate) is given the glaring risks to foot / cycling traffic from the narrowness of this path and immediate proximity to the main road, why wasn't the planning requirement enforced?

The level and frequency of risk exposure is also only going to increase. There are two pending housing development proposals in this part of our town (namely “*Land NW of Ackender Woods*” and “*Land West of Brick Kiln Lane*”). Both sites will have a fundamental impact on the quantity of vehicular and human-powered movements along the Basingstoke Road in both directions. Outline proposals I have seen for both sites extol the credentials of sustainability, including more walking and cycling. This provides a golden opportunity for those involved with Alton’s town planning at Hampshire County Council (HCC) and Highways, East Hants District Council (EHDC) and Alton Town Council (ATC) to plan the holistic requirements for our town’s infrastructure and work collaboratively in a joined-up manner with both sites to develop proposals that actually deliver on their stated aspirations and the town’s needs.



In parallel, the pathway along the Basingstoke Road from the Beech turn-off through into Alton is part of a key artery (route 210) of the confirmed, strategic Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), to deliver on cycle / walking networks and connectivity to outlying villages. However, sections of this route are not fit for purpose. Focusing on the Basingstoke Road between the Beech turn off and Brick Kiln Lane, the section from Pertuis Avenue to Will Hall Farm is narrow, uneven and poorly maintained. It is not fit for purpose as a safe, reliable cycling / walking path. And then there is the ‘death run’. If it was meant to have been tackled in 2004-5 but wasn’t, then all the more important it is done now.

Ultimately, this is not just about a few ardent cyclists and walkers. The paths leading to / from Alton along the Basingstoke Road in the vicinity of Brick Kiln Lane are well used by many pedestrians, dog walkers, cyclists, runners and families of all ages. Access to / from Alton plus the countryside walks via Brick Kiln Lane must be safe, well maintained and accessible for all the community. This is just not the case today.

Could the planets be starting to align? The LCWIP’s route 210 is a defined, strategic infrastructure solution for Alton. Meanwhile emergent developer proposals chirp of encouraging cycling and walking. I spy an open goal. It’s up to HCC and Highways, EHDC and ATC to stick the ball in the net, to insist and ensure relevant infrastructure investments are made as part of probable housing development. You can’t have a credible strategic walking/ cycle route that has badly maintained, uneven stretches or a highly dangerous bottleneck. The ‘death run’ has to be sorted. I have heard a couple of possible solutions touted so far. Perhaps no option will be easy, but the gauntlet has to be laid at HCC and Highways, EHDC and ATC’s doors to ensure the right planning decisions are made, followed through on and delivered.

Yours faithfully, Martyn Edwards



By Tony Cross

History on the Ground

As one who has walked the streets of Alton for many years with young children in pushchairs and latterly exercising a dog, it is amazing how much evidence of past industries one encounters.

With a professional interest in the history of the town, this perambulating has provided an opportunity to look for locally made examples of past industries — in this piece — the work of iron foundries and, in particular, drain gratings, inspection covers and tie bars used to stabilise walls of older buildings.

The accompanying photographs give a flavour of items which have a local provenance; but where were they made, when and by whom?

The Victoria Foundry in Normandy Street was established by William Henry Blake in 1846. An advertisement in a 1907 Directory gives a list of products including ploughs, cultivators, drain hole covers and iron and brass foundry work. Blakes gave way to Enticknap, who expanded to build the Alton Cycle & Motor Works in 1906. Adjacent premises were taken over and in 1914 it became The Alton Motor Works. This was acquired in 1933 by Webbers, already established in Basingstoke, who had a car showroom and workshops as well as dispensing petrol across the pavement with two long-reach hoses. It was requisitioned by the government during World War II for a variety of 'mechanical' uses and was later sold to FW Kerridge in 1958. They ceased operations there in the

mid-1960s and it became a part of Central Tyres and is currently occupied by Kwik Fit.

The former iron works were vacated for the disused paper mill on King's Pond in the late 1950s and as V.F. Engineering, the firm found new markets in cement machinery and oil pipelines. The site was eventually redeveloped for housing under the name of Buttery's Court, 46a Normandy Street.

The Wey Iron Works was founded in 1865 and was owned by various members of the Hetherington family, with a variety of partners. The Iron Works were in what is currently the Community Centre, and is shown at various times as Hetherington Bros., Hetherington & Parker, Hetherington & Co., Hetherington & Smith, and Hetherington & Moore. The main products were agricultural implements and machinery, including special items for the hop industry. They also undertook millwrighting and provided the bucket winding mechanism for the well at Chawton House.

After the First World War the iron works buildings were acquired by FW Kerridge, who later ran a garage on the High Street.

When you next take a walk around the town do look down as well as up and, of course, straight ahead.



1. WF Blake Alton drain grating, Curtis Museum
2. Hetherington & Moore tie bar dated 1869
3. WF Blake Alton inspection cover
4. EG Enticknap The Foundry Alton drain grating

5. Wey Iron Works drain grating
6. Hetherington Alton drain grating
7. Blake Alton casting dated 1869



ALTON SOCIETY

Join us now and have a say and a role
in the future of our town. Use the form
on the previous page or check out our website:
www.altonsociety.org.uk

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Photo credits

**Christmas lights in the Market Square
by Rosanna Lovegrove**

Space for personalised label
for hand-delivered copy.

The Alton Society Membership Application

I/we wish to become member(s) of the Alton Society

Title First Name Surname

Title First Name Surname

Second person at the
same address (if desired*)

Address

Postcode Tel Email

(*A second person named at the same address becomes a full member of the Society for no additional subscription.) The annual subscription of £12.50 is due on October 1st each year. You can use a bank transfer to our bank (details below) or return this form with your cheque or standing order mandate (see below) to: **Richard Carter (Membership Secretary), 8 Kings Road, Alton, GU34 1PZ. e-mail: thealtonsociety@gmail.com**. Your details will be held on computer. By signing this form you consent to allow us to contact you by post, email and telephone (occasionally), to further the objectives of the Society. These can be found on our website at www.altonsociety.org.uk

Standing Order Mandate

To the Manager Bank PLC Address

..... Postcode I, (full name)

request you pay to The Alton Society, Account No. 47502608 - Sort Code: 23-05-80, the sum of Twelve Pounds Fifty Pence (12.50) every year until further notice, starting on 1st October 20..... (please complete year).

Account Number

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