

THE STORY OF ALTON

Alton – Old Town, quaint and hoary,
Figures in our country's story,
Scene of strife in long-past ages
Living still in History's pages.

Long may Alton, bright and thriving,
Form a theme for praise, and striving
Still to merit joy and gladness,
Feel not Time's mere passing sadness.

Round the scene fair memories linger,
Onward points Time's changeless finger.
Hampshire's "Old Town", quaint and hoary,
Bright be Alton's future story.

Louisa May 1908

(Local Schoolmistress and journalist)

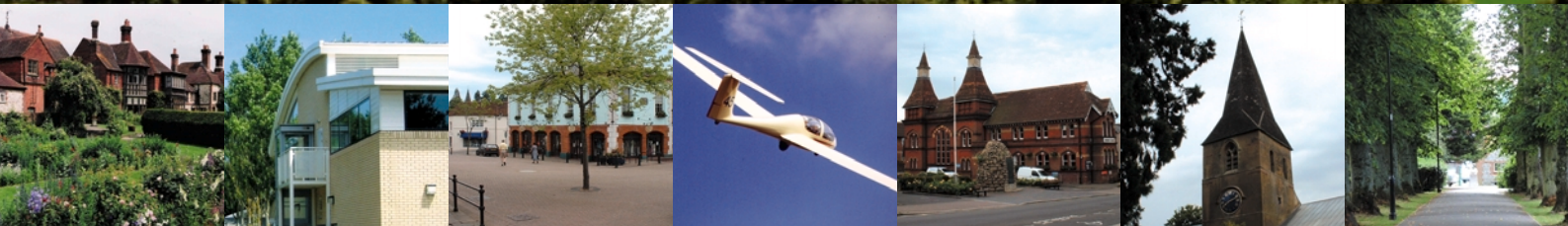


The logo for Alton 2020 features a stylized graphic of three curved lines in yellow, green, and orange above the text "ALTON 2020" in a white, serif font.

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ALTON 2020



A plan to shape Alton's future

JULY 2005 / ISSUE 1

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I. FOREWORD

Welcome to Alton 2020 – A Town Plan to Shape Alton's Future.

This plan has been developed by the community for the community and is the result of considerable local effort and public participation, driven and managed by the Alton Steering Group. Following a process, called the "Market Town Healthcheck" developed by the Countryside Agency, the Plan is the result of more than two years work.

Most importantly it sets out a Vision for the future of Alton. This will strongly influence the way in which Alton develops. The Plan contains a comprehensive town profile, listing services and facilities currently available to residents as well as a review of current strengths and weaknesses. It also identifies the opportunities presently open to Alton, which can safeguard and build a sustainable and prosperous future for the town.

Based upon this review, a number of key projects have been identified, as have potential partners who could help bring the projects to fruition. As the plan is implemented, these projects will help secure the long term Vision for the town.

The plan will build upon events which have recently benefited Alton: improvements to Normandy Street; the completion of a new library and the proposal to build a new Community Centre, which is out to public consultation. The Plan envisages further new developments to provide a "full service" town for those living and working in Alton and its hinterland villages. It is, however, important to stress that this document is a "working document" – the process of revitalising Alton as a market town will be an evolving task and regular review will take place to ensure that the actions and projects we propose to deliver, take account of changing circumstances and continue to meet the needs of all sections of the local community.

We commend this plan and ask for your continuing support and involvement as we begin the exciting phase of implementing its proposals.



Mike Heelis

For and on behalf of Alton Town Steering Group

2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Alton Steering Group was formed in 2002 and consists of local, enthusiastic, experienced people representing a wide range of active groups and organisations in the town.

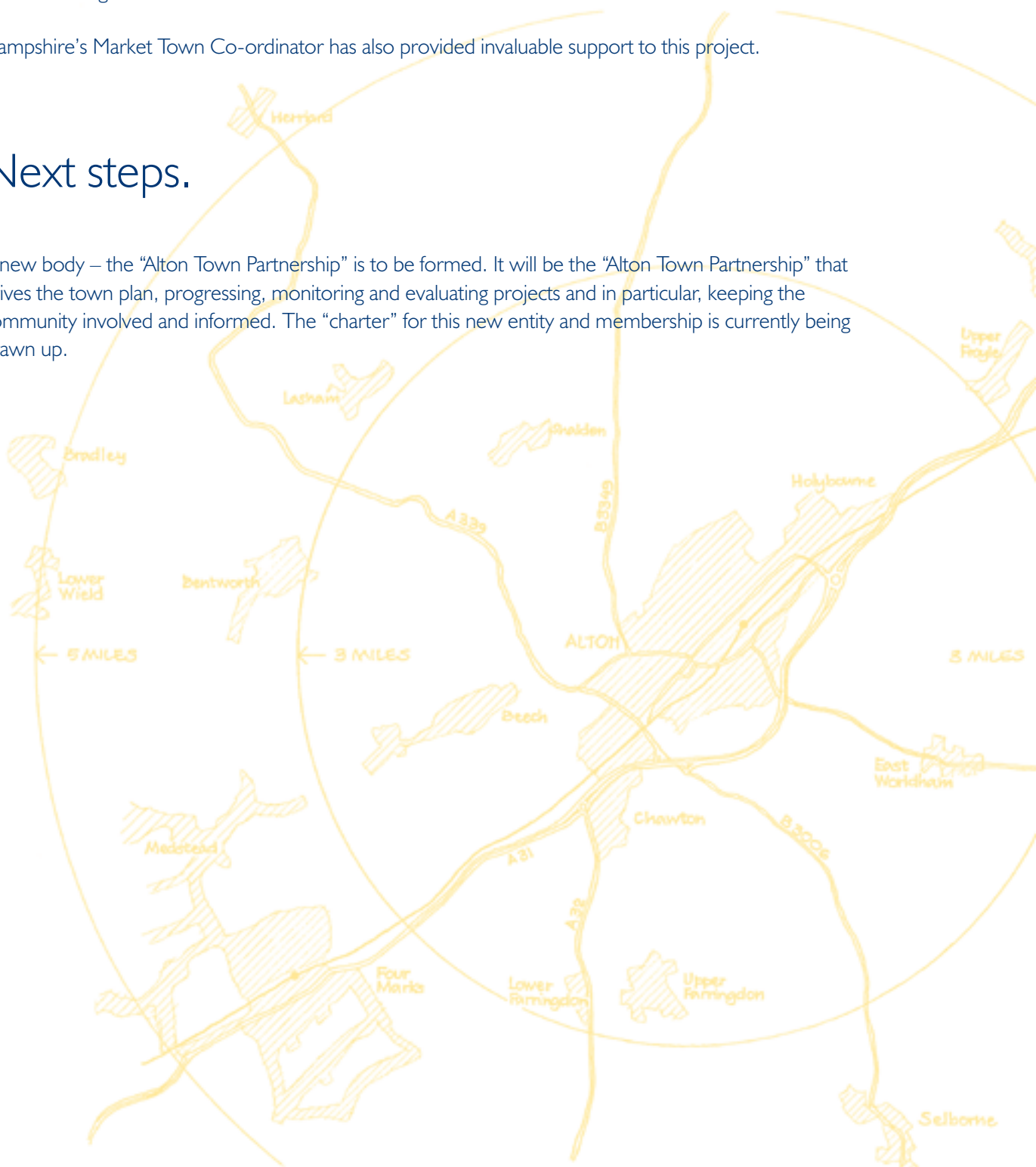
A large number of individuals and organisations has also given generously of their time and expertise.

Particular mention should also be made of those who gave their time to the working groups. Officers and members of Alton Town Council, East Hampshire District Council and Hampshire County Council have also made a significant contribution to the Healthcheck.

Hampshire's Market Town Co-ordinator has also provided invaluable support to this project.

Next steps.

A new body – the “Alton Town Partnership” is to be formed. It will be the “Alton Town Partnership” that drives the town plan, progressing, monitoring and evaluating projects and in particular, keeping the community involved and informed. The “charter” for this new entity and membership is currently being drawn up.



3. SETTING THE SCENE

3.1. THE HISTORY OF ALTON

Alton is an historic Market Town with considerable character, situated at the head of the Northern River Wey valley, surrounded by stunningly beautiful Hampshire countryside. The name “Alton” derives from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning “farmstead at the source of the river”.

Evidence of a Roman posting station, or mansion, on the Roman road, running from Chichester to Silchester, has been found in the immediate area, as has a Saxon settlement. A large 7th century cemetery was discovered and a selection of grave goods was retrieved from the site including the famous “Alton Buckle” - the finest piece of Anglo Saxon craftsmanship to have been found in Hampshire.

The first recorded Saturday market to be held in Alton was in 1288. It flourished, covering a much larger area than the present day market square. In 1307 King Edward II presented the town with a charter giving it the right to hold an annual fair – mainly for cattle and toys.

Vital to the life of the community was its field system, essential for agriculture and the creation of a surplus to buy other goods. The tracks leading to the common fields were a basic feature in the town plan and its boundaries - as they are today.

Over the centuries it has been allied to various industries including weaving, paper and brewing. Merchants were making increasing use of the port of Southampton, passing through the town on their way to London. In this way supplies for the dyers of the locally woven cloth and brewers of the beer were obtained. Of these industries, only brewing remains in the town today (although the hops are no longer grown locally!).



3.2. ALTON TODAY

Alton is a popular place to live, situated in pleasant countryside with reasonable road and rail links, and close to many major conurbations in the southeast.

People living here identify with Alton; there is a strong sense of community with the townsfolk supporting many voluntary organisations enjoying and participating in social, cultural and sporting activities. The sense of community, together with the fact that Alton is one of the safest places in the country to live, are just two of the primary reasons for Alton's population growth.

Alton also boasts a number of public green spaces, which are cherished by the local community. In particular, Kings Pond; Flood Meadows; Anstey Park and Alton Public Gardens.

Alton is an interesting combination of rural and urban development. The periphery of the town is mainly given over to agriculture but within Alton light industry and educational facilities such as Alton College, are major employers.

There are two main industrial estates with smaller industrial operations elsewhere within the hinterlands. The town centre offers a limited range of distinctive "specialist" shops together with national retailers such as Woolworth and Boots. A weekly street market, and less frequent speciality markets, attract shoppers from Alton and its' hinterland villages.

The town has experienced growth in its housing stock over the past ten years but as household size has declined, in line with national trends, so the population has grown at a slower rate and today is circa 16,600. However, the town serves approximately 34,000 people living in the town or its' hinterland villages.

Some of these villages, such as Four Marks and Selborne, have experienced considerable growth in population with increases of 25% over 13 years. Unfortunately public transport links have not kept pace with this trend and most journeys into Alton from villages have to be made by private transport.

The town and its' hinterland are home to several tourist attractions, such as Jane Austen's House (Chawton); Gilbert White's House (Selborne) and The Watercress Steam Railway. Visitors can be accommodated in one of three hotels in the centre of Alton or "bed & breakfast" accommodation.

3.3. ALTON TOMORROW

“By 2020 Alton will be a thriving and economically sustainable market town in which all people living, visiting or working – feel safe, and are cared for both in mind and body and are able to pursue activities of their choosing which enrich their lives and help build a stronger community for everyone, whilst respecting the local environment.”

Presented to local residents and businesses, this Vision has universal acceptance, but it cannot be achieved without growth – growth which local people are concerned will change the nature and character of the town. We believe that growth is vital to ensure that present businesses thrive and that new businesses can be attracted to Alton.

However, it is not the intention that through such growth the appeal and character of the town will be compromised. Rather we plan to build upon these strengths. Individuality will be preserved; community spirit will be fostered; green spaces protected and the desire to live and work in Alton will be strengthened. This will be achieved by having clear and timely communication; focussed plans and activities; realistic short, medium and long term goals together with clear and agreed prioritisation.

The growth can, and must be controlled and as you read further, measures are outlined in the plan that demonstrate how that growth will be managed.

3.4. THE MARKET TOWN HEALTHCHECK

3.4.1. BACKGROUND

In May 2002, Alton Town Council recognised the importance of having a Vision for the future town. It was important that the Vision be produced by the community, and for the community, in order to influence all those who make decisions affecting the town. The Town Council then brought together many local organisations to discuss how this might be achieved.

It was decided to follow the “Market Town Initiative ” process which had been developed by the Countryside Agency. Taking a “bottom up” approach, the Market Town Initiative enables local communities in towns and the surrounding countryside to plan their futures.

Lessons learned from towns using this “tool” and the experience of implementing resultant plans have been drawn together by the Countryside Agency and solutions developed that can be built into future Government policy and practice. In this way it is expected that funders and policy-makers will support the revitalisation of market towns.

3.4.2. FORMATION OF ALTON STEERING GROUP

In 2002, following public consultation, The Alton Steering Group was formed. The Group is made up of local, experienced volunteers from within the community, representing the business, public and voluntary sectors active in Alton. Hinterland villages were also invited to take part in the process.

The aim of the Group was to create a focus for and manage the community-led action of developing a "Vision" and long term plan to ensure a "better Alton for future generations".

Smaller Working Parties were established to focus on specific aspects of the Healthcheck.

See Appendices 1,2 & 3 for members and remit.

3.4.3. CONDUCTING THE HEALTHCHECK

During 2002 and 2003 The Alton Steering Group oversaw the implementation of the Countryside Agency's "Healthcheck" process.

The Steering Group/Working Parties consulted and sought input from both the general public of Alton and its hinterland villages (See Appendix 4). Consultation with key stakeholders, service providers and local businesses was also central to the process ensuring that all views, issues and possible solutions were gathered and taken into account at each stage when putting together the Vision.

Information was gathered relating to the quality of life in Alton together with the economic health of commercial enterprises. The information was both qualitative and quantitative.

The four Working Parties focussed upon

- i) the economy;
- ii) social and community issues;
- iii) traffic and transport;
- iv) the environment.

The details of the activities undertaken are set out in the following table, in chronological order:

STAGE	HEALTHCHECK PROCESS	PARTICIPANTS
Stage 1. Year: 2002	THE FACTS Completion of Worksheets on:- Economy; Environment; Social & Community; Traffic & Transport. S.W.O.T. analysis completed by each Working Group. "Snapshot" report of Alton completed, providing comprehensive profile of Alton, its community and the services it offers.	Steering Group; Working Groups.
Stage 2. Year: 2002/3	CONSULTATION – LOCAL RESIDENTS Public meetings held to identify local issues Self-completion questionnaire mailed to all households in Alton. 1200 responses received. Questionnaires analysed key issues identified. Draft Vision for Alton published and mailed to all households, together with 45 potential actions to be prioritised. Responses analysed and Actions prioritised.	Steering Group/ Working Groups Residents of Alton
Stage 3. Year: 2003/4	CONSULTATION – LOCAL BUSINESSES & COMMERCIAL ORGANISATIONS Business Initiatives Meetings Invites extended to 600 locally based businesses. Consultation - tourism stakeholders Tourism Healthcheck Meeting Mystery Visitor Evaluation ACCI – A Vision for the future of Alton published. Meetings held with local NFU representatives.	AIM/Local businesses/ ACCI/NFU/ Tourism Stakeholders
Stage 4. Year: 2004	S.W.O.T. finalised.	Steering Group
Stage 5. Year: 2004/5	Creation of a Vision – overall, and sector visions. Identification of projects Final prioritisation of projects, with reference to local resident surveys, local businesses. Discussions with local parish councils.	Steering Group Steering Groups/ AIM/Local Businesses/ Local organisations
Stage 6. Year: 2005	Development of: Alton 2020 - A Town Plan to Shape Alton's Future. Endorsement of the Town Plan given by Alton Town Council on 11th March 2005.	Steering Group

3.5. KEY FINDINGS OF THE HEALTHCHECK

3.5.1. CONSULTATION WITH LOCAL RESIDENTS – A SUMMARY IN ORDER OF PRIORITY

- a) Protect and enhance all existing parks, defined green spaces and allotments, minimising development on green spaces.
- b) Produce a Town Design Statement. Ensure that any development of the town is undertaken in a sympathetic and realistic manner and is supported by adequate infrastructure.
- c) Pursue the enhancement of medical services including A & E capability, supported by improved ambulance and domiciliary care services.
- d) Ensure that the Town Council takes as much direct responsibility as legislation allows for all aspects of the town including planning, local services and facilities – reclaiming Alton for Altonians.
- e) Pursue ways of improving the quality and range of retail facilities within the town.
- f) Vigorously pursue higher standards of environmental maintenance and cleanliness throughout the town and its surroundings.
- g) Demand priority to be given to low cost housing for first time buyers and alternative types of tenure, rather than social housing. In addition, new housing should reflect the demographic and social needs of the town and hinterland villages.
- h) Increase police presence on the streets, particularly at vulnerable times.
- i) Press for traffic evaluations for through traffic and future developments in the town.
- j) Introduce 24 hour CCTV in the town centre.
- k) Restore the dual railway track to Farnham.
- l) Work in harmony with the farming community to maintain the character and beauty of the surrounding countryside.
- m) Protect and enhance the environs of the River Wey, Cut Pound, Kings Pond and Flood Meadows.
- n) Campaign for a modern integrated travel centre, with a combined railway, bus and taxi station, and adequate car parking facilities to meet the needs of both local people and tourists using the Watercress Steam Railway.
- o) Work with relevant authorities to ensure the building of a replacement multi-discipline Sports Centre that reflects existing and future sporting needs.
- p) Engage with young Altonians, through the creation of a Youth Council, voluntary organisations and educational establishments to encourage citizenship of Alton and identify the facilities they want and would use

Further analysis of the questionnaires highlighted issues that particularly affect the youth of the town:

- a) Transport links between Alton and the outlying villages, particularly at night.
- b) Employment opportunities in and around Alton are perceived as limited.
- c) There was recognition that in the future there would be a need for cheaper rental accommodation.
- d) Shopping in Alton for clothes, music and skate/surfing equipment could be improved.
- e) Alton is not home to a fast food outlet!
- f) Youth club facilities should be extended and additional evening “entertainment”, such as a disco/nightclub and mainstream cinema complex would be well received.

(Source: Postal Surveys. See Appendices 6, 7, 8 and 9 for details).

3.5.2. CONSULTATION WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES, COMMERCIAL ORGANISATIONS & FARMING COMMUNITY – A SUMMARY

The main concerns of the group were that:

- i) The image of Alton needs to be modernised and marketed professionally.
- ii) In a competitive field, Alton needs to “punch above its weight” in order to compete effectively against other similar towns for the attention of potential new businesses and also district, county and regional resources.
- iii) There are implications for the farming community, as a result of growth through the establishment of new business parks and affordable housing developments in hinterland villages.

The group had a clear vision for the future of Alton:

“Alton should become a superior traditional Market Town with an individual and high quality retail and commercial sector, integrated with a managed “Town Centre Events and Activities Programme”. Together these would provide Alton with a vibrant and continuously evolving Town Centre and offer the district community and visitors premium shopping, service, education and employment opportunities”.

The outcome would be a town centre, coupled to and supportive of a modern industrial environment that sustains advanced, conventional and traditional businesses and provides the circumstances for business initiation and long-term growth.

Alton would, ideally, be at the centre of a modern, efficient and reliable communication network, providing rapid access to the Capital, major airports, rail centres, cities and ports in the south-east of England.

(Source: Local Businesses/ACCI/NFU. See Appendices 10, 11 and 12 for details)

* ACCI view represents 100+ local business members.

3.5.3. Response from parishes within the hinterland

When the decision had been taken to conduct the Market Town Initiative Healthcheck, Alton Steering Group invited Parish Councils to take part in the process. Initially, several representatives attended the meetings but unfortunately the attendance dropped off. In January 2005, the Steering Group again contacted parish councils within Alton's hinterland, requesting time at the next Parish Council meeting to present the status of the Town Plan and asking for response and input. Five presentations have already taken place. We have received feedback from 3 of these parishes. (Binsted; Four Marks and Medstead).

In summary, the parishes are reasonably satisfied with Alton as a "service centre". However, it is clear that residents of the hinterland villages do not consider Alton to be a "preferred shopping destination". The shopping experience could be improved if there were more distinctive "specialist" shops in keeping with a market town.

It is felt that an "incentive" might persuade specialist retailers and small businesses to establish themselves in Alton.

Any growth in the housing stock should include affordable housing to help keep young people in Alton. Public transport, and the cost thereof, is important particularly to elderly residents and again could be improved. If this were not to happen, it would be vital to ensure that public car parking was not reduced and the costs not increased!

Finally, the character of Alton, as defined by its green spaces, buildings of interest, active sporting community and small, specialist shops should be protected.

(Source: Written Responses. See Appendix 13 for details)

3.5.4. Tourism Healthcheck

Alton and its' hinterland villages are home to a number of nationally (and internationally) renowned tourist attractions . These include Jane Austen's house; Gilbert White's house and The Watercress Steam Railway. Its' location also makes Alton a natural "gateway" to the planned South Downs National Park.

Alton offers good, reasonably priced parking for tourists, including spaces for disabled drivers. It has a good selection of catering outlets although fewer coffee shops than would be expected. However, Alton does not cater adequately for mothers and babies, having no "Baby Change" facility in the town or "Mother and Toddler" parking spaces.

Alton does have a good selection of both national retailers such as Boots and Woolworth as well as independent, distinctive "specialist" retailers. However, not as many of the stores open on Sundays or after 5.30pm as might be expected.

It is clear, from the Healthcheck, that Alton has the ability to attract more visitors and tourists but to do so Alton must increase awareness of its attractions and develop a consistent brand image through all its communications (literature/website etc). It must build upon its appeal and character to promote itself as a friendly market town.

Linking "gateways" to the town, e.g. Alton Railway Station to the market square and town centre should be improved through better directional signage. These issues will be addressed in the Town Design Statement and the Marketing Plan for Alton.(See Economic and Environmental Action Plans)

Alton must also give consideration as to how it can increase the range of distinctive "specialist" shops to attract visitors from outside its natural catchment area to allow it to compete with other market towns within the area, such as Petersfield.

(Source: Mystery Visitor Assessment; Postal Survey of local Accommodation & Attraction Providers; Tourism Stakeholder Meeting. See Appendix 15 for details)

3.6. STRENGTHS; WEAKNESSES; OPPORTUNITIES; THREATS

Evaluating the responses from all major “stakeholders”, the SWOT analysis reveals very clearly that there are key issues to be addressed in order to safeguard the character and appeal of the town and set it on a positive future course. Of particular concern is the town centre, which does not meet the expectations of residents, those working in Alton or visitors. The “exodus” of young people from Alton is also of considerable concern.

The SWOT also highlights the opportunities open to Alton, such as improving the Town Centre and the subsequent shopping and leisure experience for those living, visiting or working in Alton as well as promoting the very enviable educational facilities based in Alton.

The redevelopment of industrial areas also provides an opportunity to rejuvenate the local economy and create new jobs.

In addition, the enrichment that could be offered to residents through enhanced community facilities is an opportunity to be vigorously pursued. Provisional agreement has already been received to build a new “landmark” Community Centre in Alton.

(See Appendix 14)

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Location.	Marketing of Alton.	Manage the expansion of Alton.	Inertia.
Safe & Clean Environment.	Poor Shopping Centre.	Improve marketing of Alton.	South Downs National Park.
Educational/Learning Facilities.	Poor provision for young people.	Improve Alton's shopping experience.	Uncontrolled housing development.
Sporting Facilities.	Public Transport.	Capitalise upon South Downs Park opportunity.	Population balance shifts.
Green Spaces.	Inadequate disabled facilities/access.	Improve transport services.	Large commercial developments.
Tourist Attractions.	Lack of affordable Housing.	Improve Alton's community facilities.	Quality of transport links reduced.
Healthcare Services.	Road layout and signage.	Development of brownfield sites.	Reduced number of retailers.
The town's markets.	Commuting.	Strengthen Alton's employment base.	Sports Centre provision reduced.
Community Support.			Bordon & Whitehall expansion.

4. THE VISION FOR ALTON 2020

At the heart of the Town Plan is the vision for the future of Alton. The Vision sets the direction of the plan and guides future action. It expresses the collective desire and identifies desirable change. The Vision has gradually evolved and has now been crystallised by the Steering Group into one all-embracing statement:

“By 2020 Alton will be a thriving and economically sustainable market town in which all people, living, visiting or working – feel safe, and are cared for both in mind and body and are able to pursue activities of their choosing which enrich their lives and help build a stronger community for everyone, whilst respecting the local environment.”

5. ALTON 2020 – A TOWN PLAN TO SHAPE ALTON’S FUTURE.

THE TOWN PLAN STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

Based on the information and key findings that have been gathered during the Healthcheck process, and in support of the Vision, a clear set of strategic aims/guiding principles has emerged.

These provide the focus for the development of the Town Plan and a framework against which to assess and prioritise emerging projects.

The projects are grouped into four sectors:

- a) Environment
- b) Local Economy
- c) Health, Community & Recreation
- d) Transport & Travel

The key projects within each sector have been categorised as short, medium and longer term according to:

- i) scale of the project
- ii) ease of implementation and most importantly
- iii) the views and priorities expressed during the process of public consultation

Many of the projects require sustained commitment and may not be fully realised until 2020 (and even beyond).

It will be critical that the projects are monitored and regularly reviewed to ensure that they are tracking against the agreed objectives. The list of projects will also be updated or reprioritised as circumstances change and as new opportunities arise.

5.1. THE TOWN PLAN – BY SECTOR

5.1.1. Environment

The Vision

- Nestling in the Hampshire countryside, Alton will continue to be a market town of unique character and history. New building developments will complement the existing architectural style and character of Alton and will not unnecessarily interrupt the present views of the surrounding hillsides.
- Altonians and visitors will be able to appreciate and enjoy Alton's public green spaces, which the local council will continue to maintain and improve.

Aims/Principles

- To protect and maintain Alton's public green spaces and ensure that future developments do not unnecessarily interrupt the present views of the surrounding hillsides and, architecturally, integrate with the existing style and character of Alton.
- Existing accommodation, for either residential or business purposes should be fully utilised, to meet increased demand, minimising the need for "new build".
- Housing developments will be carefully planned and managed to provide appropriate/affordable housing for the increased population.

Projects

Short Term (Delivery within 3 years)

- Develop a brief and commission a Town Design Statement.
- Produce an "up-to-date" schedule of buildings for public listing.
- Identify, and then monitor sites under development pressure. Identify town sites (including infill and brownfield) suitable for development.
- Develop and implement policies to manage controlled expansion of Alton.
- Develop a strategy to fully exploit the opportunity presented by the South Downs National Park.
- Lobby for improved radio and television reception.

Medium Term (Delivery within 4 -6 years)

- Determine services suitable for delegation to Alton Town Council within current legislative confines.

5.1.2. Local Economy

The Vision

- Alton town centre will be the shopping destination of choice for those living and working in Alton and its hinterland villages, supporting an appealing range of distinctive “specialist” shops and attractive markets.
- Bespoke business premises will encourage new hi-tech and traditional businesses into the town, which, in turn, will provide employment for local people.
- Housing developments will be carefully planned and managed to provide appropriate, affordable housing for the increased population, particularly young first-time buyers.
- The necessary infrastructure will be in place to support the increased population, particularly schools, hospitals and all mains services.
- Tourists will be drawn to the town, visiting its' attractions and using the local facilities.

Aims/Principles

- To continue to be the premier town within the East Hampshire District with a clear business strategy to attract new retail and commercial businesses into the town and support existing businesses.
- To engage and retain young people by effectively communicating the work and social benefits Alton can offer.
- To build tourism by effectively marketing, and making easily accessible, the sites and attractions of interest in Alton and its outlying villages

Projects

Short Term (Delivery within 3 years)

- Commission a Planning Study to re-develop Alton Station area into mixed commercial use (start-ups and retail park).
- Develop and implement a Marketing Plan for Alton.
- Develop and implement an incentive scheme to encourage both commercial businesses and retailers currently trading elsewhere, together with “start up” businesses, to choose Alton.
- Increase appeal of town markets by attracting more varied and unusual stallholders to attend.
- Create a single website for Alton www.altontown.co.uk.
- Lobby to improve appearance of Mill Lane industrial estate.
- Develop a comprehensive service support package for both large and small businesses to improve business effectiveness and efficiency.

-
- Develop a support package for start-up businesses, providing business advice and local knowledge.
 - Create B2B marketing campaign to encourage local sourcing and joint bidding for contracts.
 - Develop a plan to support local farmers

Medium Term (Delivery within 4 -6 years)

- Commission a Planning Study to re-develop the Mill Lane industrial estate.
- Assist local businesses with young person recruitment by promoting at universities and career exhibitions, as well as Alton College, Eggars School, Amery Hill and Alton Convent.

5.1.3. Health, Community and Recreation

The Vision

- Alton will continue to be a town that cares for all sections of its community where everyone feels and is safe. Police will regularly patrol the town centre.
- A purpose-built Community Centre will provide a wide range of educational, recreational and cultural courses and activities for residents of Alton, its outlying villages and beyond.
- A new Sports and Leisure facility will offer a comprehensive choice of leisure pursuits for all to enjoy.
- Local health, welfare and social services will be further strengthened, thereby reducing the need for residents to travel.

Aims/Principles

- To ensure Alton is a place where all citizens and visitors feel safe and are safe in their homes and in public places.
- Healthcare and educational service quality will be maintained whilst meeting an increased need.
- Alton will provide accessible and effective modern facilities for all members of the community who wish to participate in sporting, educational, cultural and leisure activities.
- To encourage people to both live and work in Alton, reducing the numbers of commuters.
- Alton Town Council, where possible, will manage local services.
- To safeguard the facility of a cinema and create an enhanced venue for live performances in Alton

Projects

Short Term (Delivery within 3 years)

- Support and implement plans for the construction of a new fully accessible Community Centre.
- Investigate need for increased policing and/or CCTV in both town centre and within the larger community.
- Secure Sunday opening for The Allen Gallery and Curtis Museum
- Investigate how ambulance and trauma response times can be reduced.
- Lobby for review of domicilliary care services to ensure current and future demand can be met.
- Investigate how NHS dental services can be provided to meet local need.
- Develop case for 24/7 minor injuries unit and local diagnostic and treatment centre to be located in the town.

Medium Term (Delivery within 4 - 6 years)

- To work with relevant Authorities to ensure the construction of a new enlarged Sports Centre to cope with increased demand for both wet and dry side activities.
- Investigate options for the continued provision of cinema and live performance to meet local demand.
- Develop a communications plan to keep residents informed of health service developments and how to access services.

5.1.4. *Transport and Travel*

The Vision

- Alton and its hinterland villages will be accessible and convenient to residents, workers, commuters and visitors, having an integrated and synchronised public transport system. Improved rail links will reduce commuting time for residents. Reliable, frequent and clean buses that use “on demand” technology will run to outlying villages during both the day and the late evening.
- A new road layout will be in place, alleviating current traffic pressure points and making the town centre more accessible to locals and visitors alike.

Aims/Principles

- To make Alton accessible and convenient to residents, workers, commuters and visitors, using either private or public transport.

Projects

Short Term (Delivery within 3 years)

- Commission Traffic Survey to optimise traffic management in and around Alton town centre.
- Lobby Stagecoach to provide an integrated train and bus timetable.
- Monitor Cango bus scheme and if beneficial, encourage HCC to extend and develop the scheme.
- Determine feasibility of re-opening peak-time railway link between Alton and Alresford.

Medium Term (Delivery within 4 - 6 years)

- Lobby South West Trains to “dual-track” the rail line between Alton and Farnham.

Long Term (Delivery with 7 – 10 years)

- Lobby HCC to improve the A339 between Alton and Basingstoke to alleviate pressure points during peak times.

6. SUMMARY OF PROJECTS

6.1. ENVIRONMENT

ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS	PROPOSED ACTION (output)	OUTCOME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS/COSTS	TIMESCALE/PRIORITY
FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS	Identify, then monitor sites likely to come under development pressure both in and around Alton Identify areas within Town boundaries (including infill sites and brownfield sites) which would be suitable for development. (Ref: EHDC See Appendix 16/3:3d; 7 and 9)	1) Afford protection to sites vulnerable to development and to the surrounding hillsides against visually intrusive development. 2) Better utilisation of sites suitable for development. Outcome will be fed into Town Design Statement.	ATC; ACCI; EHDC; Local Groups £££££	Short/High
MEETING GROWING HOUSING NEED	Develop and implement policies for ensuring managed expansion of Alton within reasonable geographic boundaries and with adequate supporting infrastructure. (Ref: EHCP and EHDC. See Appendix 16/2i and 16/3:3b; 7; 9 and 10)	Sustainable housing development that reflects Alton's needs and character, and provides a balance of housing including executive and alternative social housing.	ATC; ACCI; EHDC; HCC £££££	Short & on-going/High
SDNP	To research and develop a strategy to exploit the opportunities offered by the South Downs National Park. (Ref: Countryside Agency and EHCP. See Appendix 16/1 and 16/2iii)	Increased vitality and sustainability of the town.	ATC; SDNP ATP; EHDC £££££	Short/ Medium
TOWN DESIGN STATEMENT	Commission a Town Design Statement (Ref: Countryside Agency, EHDC and EHCP. See Appendix 16/1, 16/3:3d and 16/2iii; 7; 9 and 15) Produce updated schedule of buildings to be considered for public listing	Town Design Statement will have an influence on local planning policy. An up-to-date schedule.	ATC; EHDC; ACCI £££££ Local Groups ££	Short/High Short/Low
LOCAL SERVICES	To identify services suitable for delegation to ATC within current legislative constraints.(Ref: Appendix 7 and 9)	To enhance local feeling of self-governance.	ATC; EHDC	Short/High

6.2. ECONOMY

ECONOMIC PROJECTS	PROPOSED ACTION (output)	OUTCOME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS/COSTS	TIMESCALE/PRIORITY
REGENERATION OF KEY SITES	<p>To commission a Planning Study, from Planning Consultants or Architects, to re-develop Alton Station area, thereby effectively linking the town with the Railway Station.</p> <p>Consideration to be given to mixed commercial use (start-up units and retail park) supported by an improved sustainable transport interchange. (SWT/MHR) (Ref: SEEDA. See Appendix 16/4; 10 and 11)</p>	<p>A study providing several development options for the area. This study would be the prelude to a Master Plan to put forward for public consultation, once Planning Approval had been sought.</p>	<p>ACCI; ATC; EHDC; AIM; SEEDA; Landlords; Agents; ££££££</p>	<p>Short/High</p>
	<p>To lobby key decision makers to improve the appearance of Mill Lane industrial estate and to project- manage the change. (Ref: SEEDA See Appendix 16/4; 10 and 11)</p>	<p>An improved, attractive working environment to encourage new businesses to set up. Net job creation target: 400</p>	<p>ACCI; ATC; AIM; EHDC; Landlords; Agents ££££££</p>	<p>Short/High</p>
SMALL BUSINESSES	<p>Provide support to small businesses as per Rural Enterprise Gateway to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create learning opportunities to build/expand business skills e.g. management and customer care skills. - Pro-actively encourage and support new business start-ups by providing local knowledge and business advice. (Ref: EHDC Priorities. See Appendix 16/3; 1d; 10 and 11) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Improved quality of service to customer ii) Reduced staff turnover iii) Improved business efficiency iii) Improved profitability i) Improved longevity of new start-ups ii) A balanced business mix as outlined in the strategy iii) New employment opportunities 	<p>ACCI; AIM; SEEDA ££££££</p>	<p>Short/ Medium</p>

ECONOMIC PROJECTS	PROPOSED ACTION (output)	OUTCOME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS/COSTS	TIMESCALE/PRIORITY
START-UP BUSINESSES	Develop a support package for start-up businesses, providing business advice and local knowledge. (Ref: Appendix 10 and 11)	Improved longevity of new start-ups. Attract and retain mix of businesses as outlined in strategy. New employment opportunities created.	ACCI; AIM ££££	Short/ Medium
	To develop an incentive scheme for “start-up” businesses and those considering relocating to Alton. In particular, specialist/independent destination retailers. (Reference: Countryside Agency and EHCP. See Appendix 16.1 and 16.2ii; 10 and 11)	An improved shopping experience, and economically viable town centre. Fewer “vacant” retail and commercial outlets.	ACCI; ATC £££££	Short/High
	Create B2B Marketing Campaign, promoting new integrated website, to encourage local sourcing and joint-bidding for contracts. (Reference: EHDC Priorities. See Appendix 16.3:2c and 10)	Improved B2B communications and networking. Better access to relevant information. Increased opportunities for local business to win local contracts.	ACCI; AIM ££££	Short/ Medium
BUSINESSES EFFICIENCY	Develop comprehensive service support package for both large and small businesses to improve business effectiveness and efficiency. (Ref: Appendix 10 and 11)	i) A business support infrastructure for smaller businesses; ii) Shared provision of services ii) Improved local knowledge/expertise. iii) Provision of a “matching service” with local professionals.	ACCI; AIM ££££	Short/ Medium
	Assist local businesses with young person recruitment, promoting through universities and career exhibitions, Alton College, Eggars and Amery Hill. (Ref: Appendix 7; 9 and 10)	i) A greater awareness, amongst young people of the employment opportunities in Alton. ii) More young people employed in the town.	ACCI; AIM; Alton College; All local secondary schools ££££	Short/ Medium
	Establish feasibility of offering Mentoring service, using local expertise to improve business efficiency. (Ref: Appendix 10 and 11)	i) Provide networking opportunities. ii) Create a register of willing participants. iii) Develop launch plan.	ACCI; AIM £££	Short/Low

ECONOMIC PROJECTS	PROPOSED ACTION (output)	OUTCOME PARTNERS/COSTS	POTENTIAL PRIORITY	TIMESCALE/
MARKETING	To develop a Marketing Plan for Alton. To include: i) A brand identity for Alton applicable across all forms of communication including directional signage and visitor information. (Ref: Countryside Agency and EHCP: See Appendix 13.1 and 13/2ii; 10; and 15)	A cohesive plan to effectively promote Alton and communicate plans and progress to key groups in order to achieve the long-term vision for Alton. Key groups include: i) Local community (town and hinterland) including schoolchildren ii) Regional and national business communities iii) Partners, stakeholders and media owners iv) Tourists	EHDC, Southern Tourist Board; ATC; AIM; Local Organisations £££££	Short/High
MARKETING	Create a single Alton Town website www.altontown.co.uk (Ref: Countryside Agency and EHCP: See Appendix 13.1 and 13/2ii; 10)	Ease of access to information ££	AIM; ATC	Short/High
ENHANCED MARKETS	To attract more varied and unusual stallholders to all markets.	Increased footfall and improved market town economy	AIM ££	Short/ Medium
FARMING	Work with the Farming community to broaden knowledge and understanding of agriculture, its impact and its local dependencies with specific focus given to diversification. Ensure that the needs of and the impact upon the farming community are considered when developing project plans, particularly related to transport, the environment and tourism. (Ref: Appendix 10 and 12)	Local plans take account of the local farming community requirements, particularly when assessing business park and new housing schemes.	ACCI; AIM £££	Medium/ Medium

6.3. HEALTH, RECREATION & COMMUNITY

HEALTH, RECREATION & COMMUNITY PROJECTS	PROPOSED ACTION (output)	OUTCOME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS/ COSTS	TIMESCALE/ PRIORITY
SPORTS & LEISURE	<p>To work with relevant Authorities to ensure the construction of a new enlarged Sports Centre to cope with the increase in population. (Ref: Countryside Agency/EHCP and EHDC. See Appendix 16/1 and 16/2i and 16/3:1a; 7 and 9)</p> <p>To support and implement plans for the construction of a fully accessible Community Centre. (Ref: EHDC. See Appendix 16/3:1a; 7 and 9)</p> <p>To investigate options for the continued provision of cinema and live performance to meet local demand. (Ref: Countryside ~Agency/EHCP. See Appendix 16/1 and 16/2i and 9)</p> <p>To lobby for Allen Gallery and Curtis Museum to extend opening hours. (Ref: Countryside Agency. See Appendix 16/1 and 15)</p>	<p>Superior sport/leisure facilities for all to enjoy and encourage health, fitness and well being of the local community.</p> <p>A 21st century Community Centre to provide cultural, educational (U3A/life-long learning) and leisure facilities for both disabled and able people alike.</p> <p>A permanent, secure local Cinema and Theatre venue.</p> <p>Increased visitors to Alton on Sundays.</p>	<p>Local Authorities; EHDC; ATC; Alton & District Sports Council £££</p> <p>ATC; EHDC; HCC; Local Groups £££</p> <p>ATC; EHDC; Community Association; Palace Cinema ££££</p> <p>ATC; HCC; EHDC ££</p>	<p>Short-Medium/ Medium</p> <p>Short/High</p> <p>Medium/ Medium</p> <p>Short/ Medium</p>
SAFETY	<p>To establish a working group to develop a case for increased policing in both the town centre and throughout the community, targeting vulnerable times and places as well as CCTV. (Ref: EHCP. See Appendix 16/2iii; 7 and 9)</p>	<p>Reduced vandalism and A.S.B. as a result of higher visibility policing and better public environment.</p>	<p>ATC; Working Group; Local Police; ACCI ££</p>	<p>Short/ Medium</p>

HEALTH, RECREATION & COMMUNITY PROJECTS	PROPOSED ACTION (output)	OUTCOME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS/ COSTS	TIMESCALE/ PRIORITY
HEALTH & EDUCATION	To work with North Hampshire Primary Care Trust to provide: i) 24/7 minor injuries unit in the town. ii) A local Diagnostic & Treatment Centre. (Ref: EHCP: See Appendix 16/2ii; 7 and 9)	Faster access to treatment. GPSIs (G.Rs with Special Interest). CISS (Community Nursing).	ATC; North Hants PC Trust ££	Short/High
	To create awareness of local services available and how to access them. (Ref: EHDC. See Appendix 16/3: 1b; 7 and 9)	Local residents will have improved confidence in local services.	ATC; North Hants Primary Care Trust ££	Short – Medium/ Medium
	To review current and future service requirements for ambulance/trauma service to ensure response time is maintained/improved. (Ref: EHCP: See Appendix 16/2ii; 7 and 9)	Response time to a call-out is reduced.	ATC; Hants Ambulance NHS Trust ££	Short/ Medium
	To lobby for a review of domiciliary care services to meet current needs and those likely of a bigger population. (Ref: EHCP: See Appendix 16/2ii; 7 and 9)	Adequate domiciliary services for the anticipated growth in population.	ATC; HCC; Social Services. ££	Short/ Medium
	To encourage more dentists to set up practice in Alton. (Ref: EHCP: See Appendix 16/2ii)	Adequate dentistry provision in Alton for increased size of population.	ATC; FDP ££	Short/ Medium
YOUTH INTERESTS	To continue to work with Alton & District Youth Council and the District Youth Service to provide leisure and cultural activities/venues to meet need of young local people. (Ref: Appendix 16; 7 and 9)	Young people have access to local events and venues which meet their requirements.	ATP; Youth Service; ADYC	On-going

6.4. TRANSPORT & TRAVEL

TRANSPORT & TRAVEL PROJECTS	PROPOSED ACTION (output)	OUTCOME	POTENTIAL PARTNERS/ COSTS	TIMESCALE/ PRIORITY
PUBLIC TRANSPORT	Lobby SWT to double the rail line to Farnham. (Ref: Countryside Agency and EHCP. See Appendix 16.11 and 16.2.ii; 7 and 9)	Shortened commuter journeys and more frequent trains	ALUA; ATC £££	Medium/ High
	Establish feasibility of re-opening line at peak times, from Alton to Alresford via Four Marks and Medstead. (Ref: Countryside Agency and EHCP. See Appendix 16/1 and 16.2.ii; 7 and 9)	More convenient for commuters/ reduced congestion at Alton Railway Station	ALUA; Mid Hants Rail; New Alresford Town Council; £££	Short/Low
	To lobby Stagecoach to integrate its train and bus timetables to and from Alton. (Ref: Countryside Agency and EHCP. See Appendix 16/1 and 16.2.ii; 7 and 9)	Timetabled links between buses and trains to improve public transport service between town centre and station.	ATC; South West Trains; Stagecoach; ATC £££	Short/ Medium
	Monitor Cango bus scheme to establish usage and encourage HCC to develop scheme (Ref: Countryside Agency and EHCP. See Appendix 16/1 and 16.2.ii; 7 and 9)	Improved "on demand" services outside peak hours between Alton and hinterland villages.	HCC £££	Short/ Medium
BASINGSTOKE/ THAMES VALLEY LINKS	Lobby HCC to improve A339 (Ref: EHCP. See Appendix 16.2.ii)	An effective road and transport link to Basingstoke/Reading (As good as links to Winchester)	HCC ££	Long/Low
ALTON TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SURVEY	Commission Traffic Survey (Ref: EHCP. See Appendix 16/2.ii; 7; 9 and 15)	Improved traffic flow in and around Alton town centre, particularly Butts Bridges. Improved access for visitors; less traffic congestion; easier disabled access and optimal traffic calming measures in the town centre	Stakeholders; Transport groups; HCC; EHDC £££££	Short/High

KEY Timescale: Short = 0 - 3 years; Medium = 4 - 6 years; Long = 7-10+ years Cost: £ = £10; ££ = £100; £££ = £000s; ££££ = £10000; £££££ = £100,000 +

7. ACHIEVING THE VISION

7.1. CREATING A NEW PARTNERSHIP

As the project moves into another stage of development, the Steering Group also expects to change and is currently considering its future development. Its' remit will be to act as the new vehicle to deliver the aims of the town plan, and to be the primary communication vehicle, keeping stakeholders informed of progress against objectives. It will also work to facilitate and promote all of the projects once the town plan has been adopted.

Alternative names and structures for the new body are currently under consideration. Until agreed, the "working title" of the new body is " Alton Town Partnership " .

7.2. COMMUNICATING THE PLAN

Effective communication is seen as critical to success and considerable effort will be made to ensure that all stakeholders are continually briefed and kept updated. Furthermore, full engagement of Altonians and residents within the hinterland must be maintained if implementation of the plan is to be achieved. It is intended that all communication be channelled through Alton Town Partnership, with one member of the Partnership having specific responsibility for communication .

7.3. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Town Plan was developed "by the people for the people" .A high level of community involvement has already been demonstrated throughout the whole of the consultative period and in particular through exceptionally high response rates to the postal survey and through attendance at public meetings. The interest and participation of the local people must be maintained. Alton Town Partnership will ensure that by developing an effective communications strategy and holding regular public meetings the public will remain engaged in the process.

7.4. MONITORING, EVALUATION & REVIEW

Alton Town Partnership will establish a process of monitoring, evaluation and review. Each action plan project will be set up with carefully defined time, cost and performance parameters. It will be the role of each "Project Manager" to manage their respective projects, reporting to Alton Town Partnership.

As stated previously, the Town Plan will be subject to change as circumstances alter and/or local or central government policies change. A process to monitor change will be developed and agreed by Alton Town Partnership.

7.4.1. Monitoring

Each project will be assigned a Project Manager who is likely to be a community member. Their role will be to closely monitor each project against the project objectives. He/she will be accountable to the Chair of Alton Town Partnership for delivery of the project within agreed parameters.

7.4.2. Evaluation

Each project will be fully evaluated, on an agreed staged timetable and against the project criteria principally, but not exclusively to cover:

- i) Scope
- ii) Budget
- iii) Timeline
- iv) Measurable results as outlined in the project plan.

7.4.3. Review

Alton Town Partnership will review each project against the agreed project scope on a frequent basis. Should circumstances change during the lifetime of the project, which require amendments to the original plans, these will be assessed and acted upon where necessary to ensure a successful delivery. Amendments to project plans must be agreed by the Project Team and endorsed by the Alton Town Partnership prior to being adopted.

7.5. RESOURCES

Initially, work towards development of the town plan was conducted on a voluntary basis with some small financial support from Alton Town Council and E.H.D.C. Additionally the Council also kindly provided free use of the Town Hall and a range of administrative support. Key to delivery of the town plan has been and will continue to be the selfless dedication of volunteers.

7.6. FUNDING

A Resource and Funding budget will be required to bring the town plan to fruition and will be the responsibility of Alton Town Partnership.

8. PROGRESS TO DATE

A number of actions, which have been suggested during the process of developing the vision, have already been achieved prior to the publication of this document.

- i) A youth council has been established in Alton with multi-agency support, giving young people an opportunity to put their views across.
- ii) In recognition of the benefits of managing open spaces locally, ownership of Flood Meadows was transferred from East Hampshire District Council to Alton Town Council in 2004.
- iii) Members of the steering group have also been involved in the project to develop a new community centre for Alton; a proposal that received strong support in community surveys.
- iv) The feasibility of installing CCTV for Alton is currently being explored by a number of organisations working in partnership.

9. HOW IS THE TOWN PLAN TO BE USED ONCE PUBLISHED?

The primary purpose is to influence planning at regional and local levels, linking into Regional Development Plans and Local Development Framework and to influence the Community Partnership Strategy.

The Plan will also support any project requiring external funding. In this instance it is likely that the full document, including all the supporting evidence, will need to be available to potential funding partners.

An Executive Summary will be made available in the first instance. Should it be specifically requested, the full document will be provided.

A précised version will also be available and used as the basis for further consultation across the town and as a stimulus to further extend involvement and ownership amongst voluntary and statutory organisations and ordinary townsfolk. It is likely to be a folded A4 leaflet.

GLOSSARY

ALUA	Alton Line Users Association
ADYC	Alton & District Youth Council
ATC	Alton Town Council
ATP	Alton Town Partnership
ACCI	Alton Chamber of Commerce and Industry
AIM	Alton Initiatives Management Ltd
EHDC	East Hampshire District Council
EHCP	East Hampshire Community Partnership
FDP	Family Dental Practitioners
HCC	Hampshire County Council
NFU	National Farmers Union
SEEDA	South East England Development Agency
MRF	Materials Recycling Facility
SWT	South West Trains

APPENDICES SCHEDULE

1. Members of Steering Committee
2. Remit of Steering Committee
3. Members of Working Parties
4. List of parishes within hinterland, plus Map
5. Snapshot Report
6. Healthcheck Worksheets
7. First Local Residents Questionnaire
Analysis of results
8. Draft Vision 2020
9. 2nd Local Resident consultation results
10. ACCI Vision
11. Local Business Initiatives Meeting
12. NFU Response
13. Parish Council Responses
14. Full SWOT
15. Mystery Shopper Town Audit
16. Government Agency Strategies

