

STEERING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

Great Aycliffe Town Council is the qualifying body for the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan and as such has agreed to the setting up of a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group with their own terms of reference and code of conduct.

However, it is essential for the Steering Group to have the full support of the Town Council, as the qualifying body, whilst preparing the plan and prior to publication of the draft and final version of the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan.

The Steering Group will be established for a time-limited period. The project is intended to run until a Plan has been approved by the independent examiner prior to final referendum.

Members of the Steering Group will be required to declare any personal interests that may be perceived as being relevant to the decisions or recommendations made by the group.

The role of the Group

- 1) The role of the Group is to produce a sound Neighbourhood Plan that defines the planning policy priorities identified by the community, residents and businesses of the Great Aycliffe Parish.
- 2) To determine the overall scope and objectives of the plan.
- 3) To advise on the development and co-ordination of the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4) Approve all background and evidence based reports prior to publication
- 5) Agree all consultation documents prior to publication
- 6) Take an active part and assist in the research activities conducted by the various groups and organisations whilst developing the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan
- 7) To act as a 'critical friend' when required by any of these groups.
- 8) To monitor the progress of work being undertaken by the various task/thematic groups and individuals.
- 9) Actively support and promote the preparation of the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan.
- 10) Agree, subject to ratification by the Town Council, any draft(s) and final version of the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan.

Responsibilities

- Providing advice and guidance as appropriate to those assisting with the preparation of the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan (GANP)
- Developing and monitoring a general strategic approach to the GANP.

- Encouraging and strengthening links between the work on the GANP and other relevant communities to ensure as much information as possible is disseminated into the wider public domain.
- Developing appropriate documents and policies to support the development of the GANP.
- Providing a mechanism via which requests for updates and/or attendance at meetings can be channelled.
- Providing a forum for discussion of progress.
- Assist in options appraisals/feasibility studies from emerging priorities.
- To help guide the development of recommendations for further work.
- Members of the Steering Group may be requested to speak or feedback any findings and recommendations it makes to the Plan to other meetings of interested parties.

Code of Conduct

Whilst Members, as individuals, will be accountable to their parent organisations, the Steering Group as a whole is accountable to the wider community for ensuring that the Plan accurately reflects the planning needs identified by them. The Steering Group will achieve this through applying the following principles:

- Being open and honest,
- Working selflessly and with integrity,
- Working with mutual trust and respect,
- Providing 2 way information to their parent organisation/steering group,
- Treating everyone with dignity, courtesy and respect regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, ability, or religion and belief'
- Members will be impartial in all matters, not promoting personal views but representing the views of the public.

Ways of working

- The Group will meet initially every 6 weeks and then a review of frequency will be undertaken after 6 months.
- Members of the Group will receive papers at least 3 days prior to each meeting.
- A Chairman and Vice-Chairman will be appointed to take the lead during Steering Group Meetings.
- In the event of the Chairman or Vice-Chairman not being available, a Chairman for the meeting will be appointed by the group.
- Decisions made by the Steering Group will generally be made by consensus, where a vote is required each member shall have one vote. The Chairman of the meeting shall have the casting vote.
- At least 6 members of the Steering Group must be present to achieve a quorum at the meetings. This must be 4 organisational or public representatives and a minimum of 2 Town Councillors.
- Progress reports will be prepared at regular intervals which will be presented to the Town Council's Environment Committee for information to ensure the Town Council are fully aware of all suggestions, proposals and progress.

- Draft documents will be presented to the Town Council's Environment Committee for consideration and comment.
- Notes of the meeting will be kept by an officer of the Town Council or other appointed person who must be agreed by all present.
- Notes of the meeting will be agreed by all members of the Group who attended the meeting.
- Members may be contacted between meetings for advice should the need arise.
- Members may be asked to work on sub-groups or on specific issues as appropriate.
- Individuals may be invited to provide specific advice and expertise as required.
- If a member fails to attend 3 consecutive meetings without a valid reason the member will be deemed to have resigned from the Steering Group unless otherwise agreed by the Steering Group.

Membership

5 No. Town Councillors	Councillors James Atkinson, Michael Dalton, Ian Gray, Brian Hall, Chris Wheeler
1 No. County Councillor	Councillor Mike Dixon
1 No. Voluntary Sector	Mr Syd Howarth
1 No. Rep from Business Park	Miss Kerina Clark
1 No. Rep from Community Groups	Mr David Sutton-Lloyd
1 No. Rep from Environment	Mr Jim Cokill, Durham Wildlife Trust
1 No. AAP Representative	Mr Brian Riley
2 No. Public Representatives	Mr Mark Rowcroft, Mr Ian Wiggett
+ Support from Town Council Officers	

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed every six months to ensure they are still fit for purpose.