



# Great Aycliffe

# Neighbourhood Plan

NEWSLETTER ISSUE 1

2ND JULY 2015

## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

The second round of consultation will be happening very soon

An official issues and options paper is being produced. This is the document where you can tell us how we are doing so far and provide further comments on your preferred options

The retail soft market test is underway!! We have professionals talking to retailers about whether they would be interested in setting up business here, if not, we are asking why? Keep an eye out on Facebook and local press for the outcome

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Environment** 2
- Climate change** 2
- Aycliffe Village** 2
- Housing** 3
- Transport** 3
- Retail** 3
- Local jobs and business** 4
- Other issues** 4
- Get involved** 4

## Vision

*“To make Great Aycliffe a vibrant community the Neighbourhood Plan will seek, to enhance the natural environment, support and encourage high quality housing, local jobs and improved retail and leisure facilities in a healthy, green and attractive town”*

## You spoke, we listened

Between June 2014 and November 2014 you were asked to put forward your issues and priorities for the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan.

The Neighbourhood Plan team have been working extremely hard to ensure your views have been listened to, addressed where possible or alternatively shared with other organisations.

The team attended many events and produced a town wide questionnaire to ensure everyone had the opportunity

to have their say.

1268 individuals took part in the consultation and there were 3 clear priorities for the plan: addressing retail, environment and addressing the housing need.

Three working groups were established to address your priorities.

Each group comprises of two Town Councillors, organisational representatives and a minimum of 5 public representatives.

Legally the Neighbourhood Plan must be community led, backed by evidence and should also be in general conformity with national and local policies. The policies must also be viable and deliverable.



Consultation launch 24th July 2014

## General update

In the first round of consultation, although the town wide questionnaire was available to download and complete, some residents told us they would prefer to complete further consultation online. Options have been investigated and funding has been sought and received to purchase a Survey Monkey licence, Survey Monkey

is an online tool to enable surveys and questionnaires to be completed online. As part of our evidence base we wanted to capture what is special and unique about our town therefore funding was sought and agreed to commission a professional to undertake a character assessment. A character

assessment will identify, describe, class and map what is distinctive about the Town and provide robust evidence for our policies and steer the design of future developments.

# Environment



Great Aycliffe Way

*“Renewable energy and solar panels are both worthy aims and would help tremendously with climate and family budgets. Such investment would take some time to show benefit, somebody has to start the ball rolling”*

St Andrew’s Church



You told us you would like to maintain the green and leafy character of our area. You showed overwhelming support for protecting the special greens around the Town. However, you suggested part development of the greens for parking bays to alleviate congestion. (This is covered in the transport section)

In line with national and local policies we have identified and mapped greens which are in close proximity to neighbourhoods and are special to the community. We also are proposing to protect tree lined avenues which make Great Aycliffe unique e.g. Central Avenue. You told us that planting

trees was important to the environment; we are investigating options to ensure that this continues in future developments.

The character assessment will provide robust evidence for both proposals.

## Climate change

You told us you were concerned about the environment, climate change and making Great Aycliffe a better place for future generations. You said the Neighbourhood Plan should make considerations for renewable energy sources, solar panels and allotments.

After considering allotment provision and taking into account the waiting list, current demand and the

recent expansion of the St Oswald’s site it was agreed that Great Aycliffe Town Council would continue to review the situation within day to day business.

Therefore it is unnecessary to allocate land within the Neighbourhood Plan.

We considered other sources of renewable energy including wind and solar farms. In the first round of consultation there was some opposition

for wind farms, and along with ongoing evidence from the Isles proposal which residents have strongly opposed, we would not be including wind farm development in the Plan.

Technology is ever advancing and we expect to receive numerous applications for solar farms throughout the lifetime of the Plan therefore the pragmatic approach would not be to allocate land for a solar farm but rather set criteria on how the development would look.

## Aycliffe Village

A meeting was held at Aycliffe Village Hall where 72 local residents attended. The primary concern was to prevent urban sprawl i.e. the proposed Low Copelaw site encroaching onto the village. Residents wanted to maintain the village feel.

A number of options have been considered including a settlement boundary and renewable energy site North of Demons Beck.

After consultation with Durham County Planning Authority and GANP’s Independent Planning expert it was felt the pragmatic approach would

be to designate a piece of land north of the village as a “Green Wedge”

# Addressing housing need



## Simpasture Court. Sheltered accommodation

We asked you about your future housing needs. Your priority was older persons' accommodation, in particular bungalows, sheltered accommodation (extra care) and retirement homes all within close proximity to services.

Developers are increasingly reluctant to build bungalows due to the footprint thus rendering some developments not viable.

The compromise is to build a mixture of bungalows and older persons' apartments. National and local policy tells us all developments should

have a mixture of all property types.

In view of this we would propose an enhanced percentage of older persons' accommodation as an offset to the affordable homes provision within 600 m of services which is inclusive of a pharmacy. This option will not deter bungalows from other areas of the Town. We are also investigating the possibility of a retirement village however this is in the very early stages.

There was support for domestic renewable energy.

Installing certain renewable energy technologies, such as solar thermal, photovoltaic, biomass boilers, Micro-turbines and ground source heat pumps has now been made a lot simpler because of permitted development rights.

In many cases installing the above technologies will not require planning permission as they will fall under permitted development rights.

Although the Neighbourhood Plan will aim to encourage developers to include renewables within the design of new housing, it is unreasonable to make it a mandatory requirement as it may affect the viability thus deterring developers from investing in Great Aycliffe

## Transport

You told us you have issues with parking, we are proposing 3 options:

1. Utilise grass verges for parking wherever suitable only in areas where it has been demonstrated there is a parking issue. We would ask for this parking option to be the first consideration for developers.

2. Part develop green spaces for parking where a parking issue has been demonstrated; and

3. Use parking methods which are sensitive to the surrounding area e.g. geo-grid

We have included this option because you feel strongly about our greens so to maintain the

green feel we would suggest using geo-grid parking (see pic below)

We will endeavour to limit parking issues within future developments and are investigating options to set minimum garage sizes or car ports to ensure parking methods are fit for purpose.



## Retail

**Improved retail was your number one priority.** However work is still underway to develop options. Durham County Council conducted a retail needs analysis in 2009, which was updated in 2013, which did not allocate any additional retail floor space for

Great Aycliffe for a number of reasons. The study recognises that a large proportion of residents' spending is in neighbouring towns in particular on clothing and household items. The study also reported that due to the proximity of Great Aycliffe in comparison to Bishop Auckland, Darlington,

Teesside and Durham, there are limited prospects of retailers investing in Aycliffe.

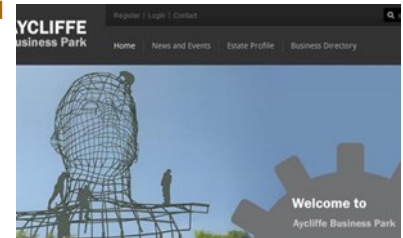
To challenge this decision we have commissioned a commercial agent to question retailers if they would be interested in setting up business here and if not, why not? This research is still underway, however we hope to have a report by the beginning of August.

# Local Jobs and business

Aycliffe Business Park (ABP) is of regional significance, with over 250 companies and 8000 staff located on the park. The Chair of the ABP steering group is a member of the GANP team and every effort has been made to try and address planning issues on the park. However, ABP is currently

working on a plan called “Shaping the Future” This plan is led by the businesses and task and finish groups are working to address various issues across the park. Rather than duplicate the work it is felt the sensible approach is for GANP to support “shaping the future”

To influence local jobs we propose that local labour agreements are in place and employment generated from any large developments in Great Aycliffe will be offered to local residents first.



## Other

You told us you had issues with bus and train services. Although these cannot be addressed through planning we felt it important to understand the range of transport issues. We have collated all of your comments from the first round of consultation and have passed them to the transport section of Durham County Council.

You told us you wanted GANP to consider joining up cycle routes across the Town. This information has also been passed to Durham County Council. They are currently working on a project called access prioritisation which aims to generate funding to address cycle and footpath issues.

There are many community centres within Great Aycliffe. You told us you were unaware of the activities in each centre. We have passed your comments to community centres across the Town.

## Getting involved and the next steps

You told us your issues and we have been working to develop clear, deliverable options to address them. We want to make sure we have got it right, therefore an issues and options paper is currently being produced.

The issues and options paper, similar to this newsletter, will provide you with information on the outcomes from the first round of consultation along with our considerations, supporting evidence and deliverable options.

This is the time when you can tell us which option you prefer or suggest amendments to what we are proposing.

Each comment you make will be considered and we will tell you if we alter the options.

This is your chance to once again have your say.

Once we have agreed on the preferred options the drafting of the Plan will commence. We hope to have the draft completed by January 2016.

The Plan will be subject to a further 6 weeks statutory consultation and aim to go to a referendum by May 2016.

You can ask questions about this newsletter in a number of ways.

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