

# Wild about Aycliffe

## The Nature Sites of Great Aycliffe



This is a community project funded and supported by the  
**Great Aycliffe and Middridge Partnership**

For further details of GAMP, please email

[gampaap@durham.gov.uk](mailto:gampaap@durham.gov.uk)

or visit the Area Action Partnership website at

[www.durham.gov.uk](http://www.durham.gov.uk)

Altogether Better  
**Durham**

Great Aycliffe & Middridge  
Partnership



## Introduction

Newton Aycliffe was developed from the principles of the Garden City movement, which was first founded in 1898 by Sir Ebenezer Howard.

In 1941, William Beveridge adopted these principles as part of the 'Beveridge Report' which formed the basis of social reform in Britain after World War Two.



Newton Aycliffe was founded in 1948 under the New Towns Act of 1946 which aimed to establish modern communities surrounded by greenbelts containing carefully balanced areas of residences, industry and agriculture.



The legacy of this planning concept is still very much visible today in the form of the areas of open green space which can be enjoyed throughout the town. Substantial space is given over to recreational activities including playing fields, parks and more natural green areas which are managed as nature reserves.

Great Aycliffe has a number of green areas for recreational activities, including parks, playing fields and woodlands, in addition to several recognised and carefully managed nature reserves.

These facilities are detailed in this leaflet to raise awareness of their existence among the town's population and help to give a more detailed understanding of their facilities.



## Aycliffe Nature Park

This park is designated a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) due to its wild grassland habitat that has developed over fifty years on an old railway siding. The site is also dominated by a substantial pond and wetland system which supports a wide range of wildlife including great crested newts, frogs and toads.



The reserve supports a rich and varied range of plants such as ragged robin, water avens, ladies smock and common twayblade.

The site is surrounded by deciduous woodland of predominantly willow and alder and wet grassland that supports breeding birds such as snipe and sparrow hawk, this also provides cover for mammals such as foxes and stoats.

**Access:** The Nature Park has a surfaced footpath which is suitable for disabled users and has access onto the Great Aycliffe Way. Limited parking is available at Traveller's Green.

**Managed by:** Great Aycliffe Town Council.



**Don't Miss:** The large pond dipping platform and information boards that detail the site history, habitats and species.

**Aycliffe Nature Park Association:** This is a small voluntary group of locals who assist to maintain and monitor the site. They also pass on their knowledge about the natural environment by running several public events throughout the year (see contact page).



## Byerley Park Local Nature Reserve

Byerley Park LNR is located on the western fringe of Byerley Park residential area and is a good example of how a valuable wildlife habitat and place to enjoy tranquil relaxation can be developed from farmland. Pockets of wildlife in hedgerows, copses, ditches and field margins spread out into

nearby areas. New woodland planting, wildflower meadow management and pond creation have provided a diverse range of habitats, which have encouraged a rich variety of wildlife.

**Facilities:** There are a network of surfaced footpaths which are suitable for disabled users and incorporates part of the Great Aycliffe Way.

The site has several information boards which provide a brief description of the site's management and various species which can be found here.

**Managed by:** Durham County Council

**Friends of Byerley Park:** This is a voluntary group of local residents who are interested in maintaining and improving this nature reserve. For more information please contact the Friends of Byerley Park (see contact page).

## The Great Aycliffe Way

The Great Aycliffe Way was originally created to commemorate 50 years of the development of Newton Aycliffe new town.

Recently an additional route has been added to encompass the southern part of the town.

**Don't Miss: The various sculptures which line the route of the walk.**

Further improvements took place during 2010 supported by funding and assistance from the Great Aycliffe and Middridge Area Action Partnership. A further leaflet on this walk is available by contacting Great Aycliffe Town Council.

## Agnew Plantation (South)

This mature broadleaf woodland acts as a wildlife corridor between Woodham Burn, North Agnew Plantation and the open countryside to the north of the town. Due to its mature nature, the woodland maintains a unique wilderness feeling and provides a habitat for many species of wildlife including tawny owl, great spotted woodpecker and butterflies such as the speckled wood.



**Facilities:** The surfaced Great Aycliffe Way passes through the woodland and a public bridleway runs along the northern limit of the site.

**Managed by:** Great Aycliffe Town Council

## Cobblers Hall Plantation

This mixed mature woodland is dominated by scots pine adjacent to the Middridge road but becomes more varied with mature beech, ash and oak deeper into the woodland.

This site has remained an isolated oasis for wildlife and provides a habitat for many plants, birds, insects and mammals such as great spotted woodpeckers, jays, frogs and grey squirrels.

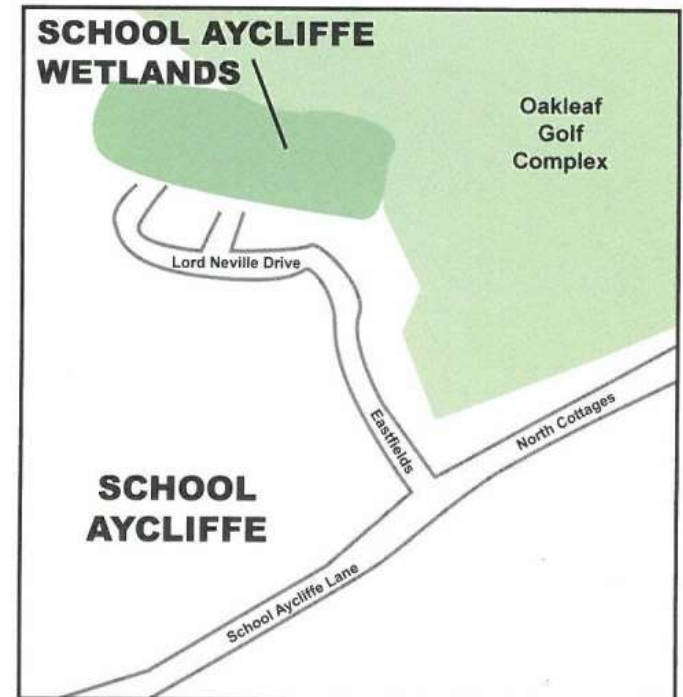
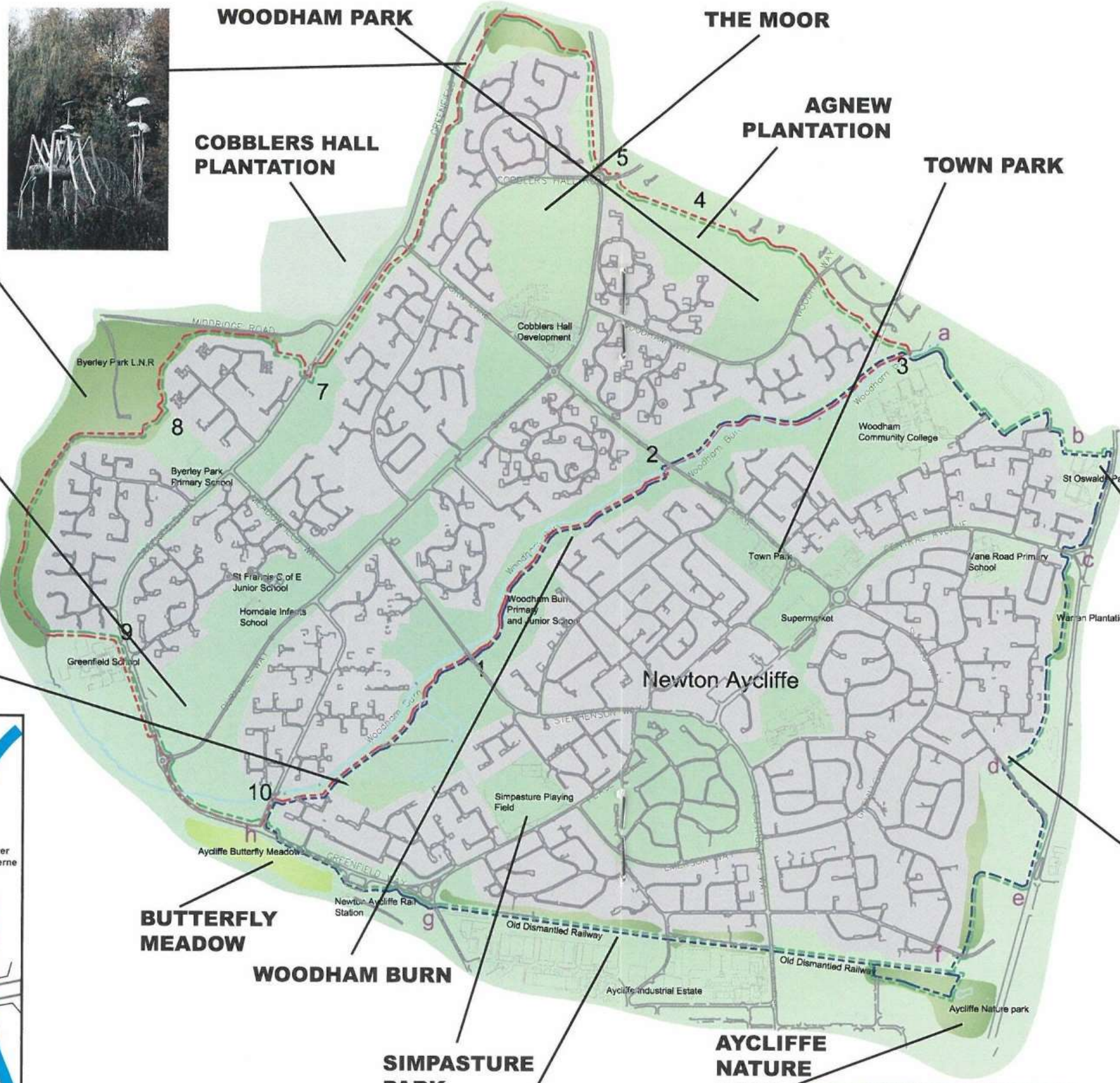


**Facilities:** Due to the wood's natural environment it has limited facilities with only a few wood sculptures. After periods of rain the footpaths can become waterlogged and muddy in this site.

**Managed by:** Great Aycliffe Town Council

**Watch out for the carnivorous Stinkhorn fungi in the autumn; it attracts flies by giving off the smell of rotten meat!**

# THE GREEN SPACES OF GREAT AYCLIFFE



- - - - GREAT AYCLIFFE WAY (NORTH)  
- - - - GREAT AYCLIFFE WAY (SOUTH)

**BYERLEY PARK LNR**



**HORNDALE PARK**



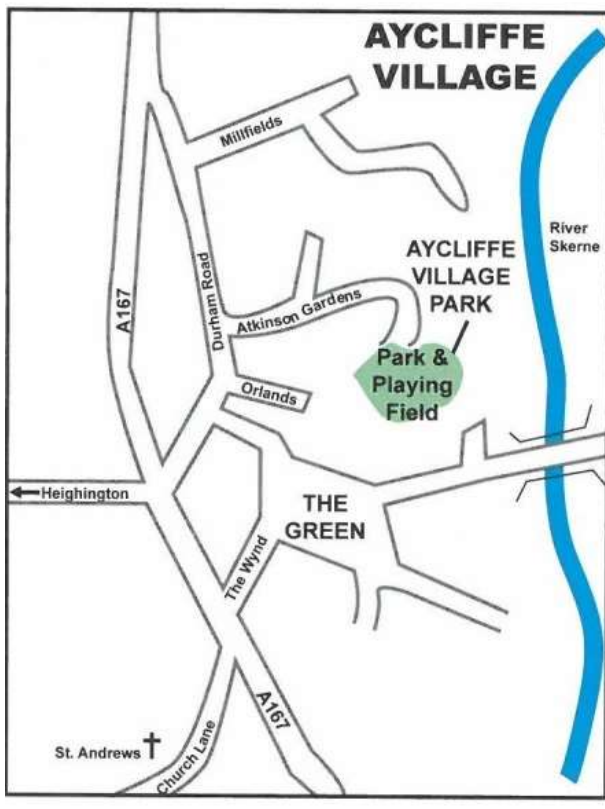
**WEST PARK**



**ST. OSWALD'S PARK**



**MOORE LANE PARK & ECO CENTRE**



**BUTTERFLY MEADOW**

**WOODHAM BURN**

**SIMPASTURE PARK**

**SIMPASTURE NATURE WALK**

**AYCLIFFE NATURE PARK**





## The Moor

The Moor is situated in the heart of the Cobblers Hall area of the town and was designated as a Local Nature Reserve in 2003. This much valued green area is appreciated for its recreational value but is also one of the last areas of remnant lowland bog in County Durham.

The site consists of mainly wet grassland with pockets of bog and scrub; birds such as the nationally declining reed bunting, linnet and yellowhammer have all been recorded here.

The Moor was also included as a location for a Sustainable Urban Drainage Scheme (SUDS) a project to allow natural green areas to absorb flood water and release this water into the system at a slower rate, as part of this proposed SUDS project additional scrapes and ponds will be created.

**Facilities:** A network of informal paths cross the site.

**Managed by:** Durham County Council

## Woodham Burn

Woodham Burn consists of a wooded river valley which cuts through the heart of the town and offers a range of high quality habitat types within this extensive site.

Of particular botanical interest is the ridge and furrow area near Humphrey Close, which produces highly regarded, species rich grassland. A range of particularly unusual plants include black knapweed, cowslip, bird's-foot trefoil, common spotted, marsh orchids and great burnet can be found here.

The Burn is also home to many insects and birds including kingfisher, jay, green woodpecker and common blue butterfly.

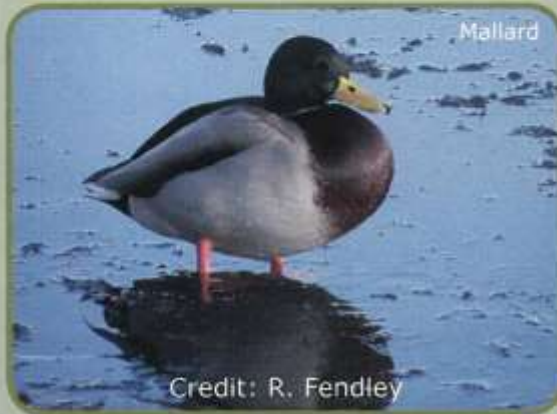
**Facilities:** The burn has a tarmac path which runs the whole length of the site, a range of information boards, arts features, seats and other countryside furniture. During 2010 much of the furniture through the burn will be renewed as part of the Great Aycliffe Way improvements funded through the Great Aycliffe and Middridge Partnership.

**Managed by:** Great Aycliffe Town Council



## School Aycliffe Wetlands

This reserve comprises approximately 20 acres of wetlands surrounded by mature woodland which descends to the north where Redhouse Beck defines the boundary. The site supports a range of habitat types, including a substantial pond, carr, scrub, woodland and wildflower meadow and a beck.



A variety of wildlife makes this nature reserve home including animals such as kingfishers, great spotted woodpecker and water voles. Wetland flora includes tufted hair grass, soft rush, reed, meadow sweet and bulbous buttercup.

**Facilities:** There is a network of surfaced paths; some of which can become muddy after periods of heavy rain. The pond also has a substantial pond dipping platform and interpretation panel showing the various species which live in the area.

**Managed by:** Great Aycliffe Town Council



Aycliffe Village has much to offer with interesting walks from the historic Saint Andrews church and an abundance of wildlife can be observed along the River Skerne which flows alongside the village.

**Watch out for a blue flash and distinctive high pitch call of the kingfisher around Redhouse Beck.**



## Simpasture Nature Walk

A former railway which served the munitions factory of Aycliffe during World War 2, this site now forms a 1 mile linear walk with a level and smooth surface which is ideal for wheelchair access.

It is a mature woodland throughout most of the route, and is dominated by species such as sycamore, crack willow, ash and oak. There is also an understory of scrub such as hawthorn, snowberry, holly and hazel.

The woodland forms an ideal habitat for many species of birds that use the cover during the summer for nesting. During the winter the trees provide an ideal additional source of winter food.

**Don't miss- this woodland walk changes character throughout the seasons and is worth a visit at any time of the year.**

**Managed by:** Great Aycliffe Town Council

## Butterfly Meadow

The grassland which borders Greenfield Way and the railway station has been managed as a wildflower meadow since 1990 and has developed into a species rich area and supports a wide range of grassland species such as birds mouth trefoil, cow slips, ladies mantle and common spotted orchid.



**Did you Know . . .** The sculpture on the site depicts an orchid with a common blue butterfly; both of which are a common sight on this meadow over the summer months.

**Managed by:** Great Aycliffe Town Council and Durham County Council

## Aycliffe Parklands

Aycliffe is also graced with many formal green spaces which are located across the town.

The 7 larger parks are located at:

- Town Park
- Woodham Park
- St. Oswalds
- Moore Lane
- West Park
- Simpasture Park
- Horndale

Each of these areas have their own character and have a blend of open green space including sports pitches, mixed play facilities and associated park buildings. St. Oswalds is more formal in character with formal gardens, while West Park has a substantial lake and wildflower areas.

All these substantial parks are managed by Great Aycliffe Town Council.

There are several smaller parks scattered throughout the area including Aycliffe Village, School Aycliffe, Byerley Park, Oakleaf and Scott Place which are managed by Great Aycliffe Town Council.

In addition, Durham County Council manage several play parks near Kimblesworth Walk, Baliol Green and Eade Close.

There is also a play area in the neighbouring parish of Middridge.



West Park



St. Oswalds Park



Woodham Park



Middridge Park

## CONTACTS

### Great Aycliffe Town Council

01325 300700 [info@great-aycliffe.gov.uk](mailto:info@great-aycliffe.gov.uk)

### Great Aycliffe Town Council – Works & Environment Manager

07970 559520 [steven.cooper@great-aycliffe.gov.uk](mailto:steven.cooper@great-aycliffe.gov.uk)

Great Aycliffe & Middridge Partnership (GAMP) is your local Area Action Partnership (AAP) which aims to engage and involve local people in making improvements to the area. The GAMP Board consists of key statutory partners, local Councillors and Public representatives who deal with local issues. There is also a wider 'Forum' which any local people can join to get involved with the local decision making process. The three key priorities of the GAMP are Environment & Street Cleansing, Activities for Young People, Support to the community & Voluntary Sector.