

## Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan - Reg.16 Consultation Responses

Summary of representations received by Durham County Council as part of Regulation 16 Submission Draft publication and submitted to the independent examiner pursuant to paragraph 9 of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act

GREAT AYCLIFFE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – SUBMISSION VERSION		
Agent	ORGANISATION DETAILS	COMMENTS ON THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
James Hall - Barton Wilmore	The Church Commissioners of England	<p><b>GREAT AYCLIFFE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – SUBMISSION VERSION</b> Barton Willmore LLP is instructed by the Church Commissioners for England (the ‘Commissioners’) to provide representations to the submission version of the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan (‘GANP’). These representations relate to the Commissioners’ land interests at Low Copelaw, Newton Aycliffe (the ‘Site’) which is being promoted as a sustainable urban extension to Newton Aycliffe through the County Durham Plan (‘CDP’).</p> <p><b>Policy GANP CH1: Landscape Character and Townscape</b> We continue to support the approach set out within Policy GANP CH1 as it requires development proposals to provide a robust landscape design that incorporates the ‘vision’ of Lord Beveridge. As set within our previous representations, the draft SPD prepared by DCC fully reflects this objective. However, all proposals are inherently different and the approach taken to landscape design will vary from site to site. Therefore, to provide additional flexibility within the policy, it is recommended that a minor amendment is made to the wording.</p> <p>As currently drafted, Policy GANP CH1 explains that “In, particular, new development should:”, however it is considered appropriate for this to be amended to “Wherever possible, new development should.” This amendment would ensure that the landscape character and townscape is maintained through development proposals, whilst providing sufficient flexibility to take into consideration the context of specific sites.</p> <p><b>Policy GANP CH2: Protection of Accessible Local Green Space Designation</b> The guidance set out within draft Policy GANP CH2 is generally supported as it identifies local green spaces within Newton Aycliffe which are of importance to local residents and which help maintain the Beveridge ‘Vision’ within the existing settlement. As part of our previous representations, it was requested that a legend was provided at Appendix D to clarify the areas of land which are being referenced. It is noted that the appendix has been suitably amended and, as such, we support the guidance contained within the policy.</p> <p><b>Policy GANP CH3: Existing Amenity Open Spaces &amp; Recreational Areas</b> Further to our comments for Policy GANP CH2, the submitted GANP includes specific reference to existing amenity open space and recreational areas within Appendix. As such, the policy is now generally supported by the Commissioners.</p> <p><b>Policy GANP E1: Green Corridors</b> The Commissioners’ support the guidance contained within Policy GANP E1 which seeks to maintain and enhance green corridors as part of new development proposals.</p> <p><b>Policy GANP E2: Aycliffe Village Green Wedge</b> Further to our previous representations in respect of Policy GANP E2, it is noted that the policy does not include any additional evidence which would justify its inclusion within the Plan. As such, the Commissioners retain their objection to the inclusion of</p>

this policy.

As previously explained, it is considered that the proximity of Aycliffe Village to the wide range of employment opportunities contained within Aycliffe Business Park make it a sustainable location to accommodate some level of growth over the emerging Plan period. However, the inclusion of a Green Wedge on the edge of Aycliffe Village will limit the opportunity for development to come forward. Given that the overall housing requirement to be allocated towards Newton Aycliffe has yet to be determined as part of the emerging CDP, the Parish Council is not considered to be justified in its approach for limiting where development can come forward.

Indeed, whilst it is appreciated that Policy GANP E2 seeks to ensure that Aycliffe Village maintains its own identity, the Policy is not supported by any evidence to justify the necessity or size of the designation. Moreover, given that land to the north of Aycliffe Village falls largely within the ownership of the Commissioners', they are in a unique position to deliver an area of separation as part of any future development proposals. In particular, future development provides the opportunity for landscape-led development which can better define the two settlement boundaries.

As such, a more appropriate approach would be to remove the Green Wedge designations from the submitted GANP so that they can be examined in greater detail as part of the emerging CDP. This will allow DCC to take a holistic approach towards strategic growth and ensure that development comes forward in the most sustainable locations. This would also provide a more suitable opportunity to identify areas of Green Wedge to protect against development in less sustainable areas.

In light of the above, it is considered that the wording to Policy GANP E2 should be amended, as follows:

**“The separation distance between Aycliffe Village and Newton Aycliffe will be maintained through the protection and enhancement of the open areas and undeveloped land around Aycliffe Village”**

The proposed amendment would ensure that any future development proposals are required to respect the separation distance between Aycliffe Village and Newton Aycliffe. The need for inclusion of green wedges could then be taken into greater consideration as part of the emerging CDP.

#### **Policy GANP H1: In-Fill Developments**

It is noted that the wording to Policy GANP H1 has been amended as part of the submitted Plan, providing additional clarification as to how in-fill developments will be determined. As such, the Commissioners have no further comments in respect of the Policy.

#### **Policy GANP H2: Dwellings Appropriate to the Needs of Residents**

On review of the changes which have been made to Policy GANP H2 as part of the submission Plan, it is understood that the Town Council is looking to ensure that future housing caters to all ages. However, we object to the current wording of the policy as it does not refer to the Government's most up-to-date guidance.

In particular, the draft Policy requires that 25% of the 1, 2 and 3-bed dwellings are delivered to the Building for Life 12 standard. However, Building for Life 12 provides a comprehensive approach to securing well-designed homes and neighbourhoods – for example, creating well defined streets and spaces, public transport linkages and a distinctive character. As such, the standard cannot be prescribed to a proportion of a proposed development.

Furthermore, as will be outlined in greater detail below, the draft Policy refers to Code for Sustainable Homes which has since been withdrawn by the Government. It is therefore considered that any reference within the GANP should be removed.

Given that the draft Policy is looking to provide homes that can be adapted to cater to all ages, it is understood to be referring to Part M of the Building Regulations which specifically refers to accessible and adaptable dwellings. However, this is not expressly stated within the Policy and would require clarification from the Town Council.

Notwithstanding the above, and as expressed within our previous representations, it is noted that the 25% threshold is not supported by any technical evidence. Indeed, whilst the SHMA 2016 outlines the likely demographic shift towards an aging population, it sets no prescriptive target to deliver new dwellings at a specific standard.

As such, it is considered more appropriate to include a degree of flexibility within the policy and allow individual developments to take account of the context of the site, local character and market dynamics at the time of development – an approach taken by DCC as part of draft Policy 31 of the CDP. Whilst the draft policy forms part of the now revoked Plan, it is considered to provide an appropriate approach to the emerging GANP – indeed the Inspector’s interim report raised no objection to the inclusion of the Policy as part of the CDP.

In light of the above, it is proposed that draft Policy GANP H2 is replaced with the following text:

**“To contribute towards meeting the needs of Great Aycliffe’s ageing population we will require 10% of private or intermediate housing on sites of 0.5ha or 10 units or more which, in relation to design and house type, increase the housing options of older people. Appropriate house types considered to meet this requirement include:**

- **Level access flats;**
- **Bungalows;**
- **Sheltered Housing or Extra Care Scheme; or**
- **Housing products that can be shown to meet the specific needs of a multigenerational family.**

**Unless it can be demonstrated by means of a viability study submitted by the developer that this requirement would undermine viability of the scheme, either in terms of financial viability or lack of market demand for these products. The developer will be required to demonstrate, to the Planning Authority’s satisfaction that this is the case.”**

The proposed approach would ensure that major residential developments provide sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of residents at the time an application is submitted. Furthermore, the inclusion of the second paragraph within draft Policy GANP H2 in respect of viability is welcomed and has been repeated within our proposed amendment to the policy.

It is noted that the amended Policy includes provision for bungalows to come forward as part of a development proposal. Our comments for draft Policy GANP H2 should therefore be read alongside our comments to draft Policy GANP H7, below.

**Policy GANP H6: Energy Standards**

It is noted that the Government, through a written ministerial statement dated 25th March 2015, has revoked Code for Sustainable Homes and requires new developments to be considered against Building Regulations. As such, it is requested that draft Policy GANP H6 is updated with reference to Building Regulations to ensure that it accords with national policy on energy standards.

**Policy GANP H7: Bungalow Provision**

Whilst the objective of meeting the needs for older residents is supported, we object to providing 10% bungalow provision on all new housing sites of 10 or more dwellings.

		<p>Indeed, the SHMA 2016 provides no specific figure on the number of bungalows which will be required over the emerging Plan period. It is appreciated that the SHMA 2016 outlines that there is a shortfall of bungalows across County Durham however, without an understanding of the overall number of dwellings coming forward within the Neighbourhood Area, the inclusion of a 10% threshold is considered to be wholly arbitrary.</p> <p>Moreover, when the requirements set out in draft Policy GANP H2 are also taken into consideration, the draft GANP places significant limitations on the housing mix which can come forward as part of a major residential development.</p> <p>As such, and as highlighted above, it is considered appropriate to delete draft Policy GANP H7 as the requirements will be met through the proposed amendments to draft Policy GANP H2.</p> <p><b>Policy GANP H8: Affordable Housing</b> Following our comments to the draft GANP consultation, it is considered that the wording of Policy GANP H8 has been suitably amended and is now generally supported.</p> <p><b>Policy GANP DB1: Large Scale Development Requirements</b> The contents of draft Policy GANP DB1 are noted and generally supported as suitable requirements for large scale development proposals.</p> <p>In addition to the comments outlined above, there is considered to be an opportunity to provide a more positive approach to strategic housing development within the neighbourhood area. Whilst it is appreciated that the draft GANP does not propose the allocation of strategic residential sites, it can still outline the potential opportunities for strategic growth to come forward. Indeed, Low Copelaw has previously been identified as a suitable and sustainable location to accommodate residential development.</p> <p>However, despite the significant work that has been undertaken in respect of the Site, it is noted that there is no specific reference within the draft GANP. Given that the GANP does not propose the allocation of strategic sites, it is not considered that a specific policy would be appropriate in this instance. However, it would be considered appropriate to include reference to the Site within the introductory chapter to provide greater context to the planning policy background as well as the potential opportunities for growth over the emerging Plan period. In particular, it is recommended that further details of the draft SPD are included - which is already referenced at Appendix A of the draft GANP.</p>
Mark Harrison	The Coal Authority	As you will be aware the Neighbourhood Plan area lies within the current defined deep coalfield. However there are no surface coal resources within the plan area and no mining legacy features are present. Therefore The Coal Authority has no specific comments to make on the Neighbourhood Plan.
Jules Brown	Historic England	<p>Overall, the plan is a thorough and comprehensive document worthy of congratulations. It meets the requirement for the plan to have a positive strategy for conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, although it still does not expressly refer to the historic environment in its vision or objectives.</p> <p>We are also pleased that, in response to our previous comments, the plan has been amended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· provide clarity on designated and some non-designated heritage assets,</li> <li>· include a new policy, GANP CH4, to offer some protection for the significance of heritage assets in addition to that for Aycliffe Village Conservation Area (GANP E3).</li> </ul> <p>However, we are disappointed that more has not been made of the findings and recommendations of the Heritage &amp; Character Assessment, both generally across the plan and particularly in relation to the conservation area. As set out in our previous</p>

		letter, there are opportunities which the plan could take to provide clarity on development character, and on positive actions to benefit the conservation area such as prioritising preparation of the character appraisal and management plan it needs. Expressed these opportunities in the plan, rather than leaving them only in the evidence, would help the plan better fulfil its role of shaping and directing sustainable development (NPPF paragraphs 183-185).
James Hudson	The Environment agency	I have read through the neighbourhood plan and we have no objections to it. The sites they are allocating are local green open spaces and don't have an environmental impact.
Angela Smurthwaite	Livin Housing	<p><u>Environment - Objective 3:</u> This relates to the wish to 'retain and protect the green and leafy character' of the area. livin agrees with this however seeks clarification that proposals will be flexible enough to allow community based regeneration in areas where estate layout is poor and housing quality and design requires addressing (for example flat roofed housing) or where previous homes have been demolished.</p> <p><u>Housing - Objective 5:</u> <b>Older Persons accommodation</b> livin is pleased to see acknowledgement of the rapidly ageing population in Newton Aycliffe and the need for suitable housing and services to support older people to remain independent and active in this community. However, the Plan suggests that older person's accommodation should be built within 600m walking distance of the Town Centre. livin suggests that homes should be built where people want to live, for example near family and friends.</p> <p>Additionally, we question if there is sufficient land available for development within the town centre radius to build older person's accommodation. Furthermore we would welcome clarification as to whether older person's accommodation would be welcomed outside of this radius if the development was within range of other retail or older person's service provision.</p> <p><u>Housing - Objective 5:</u> <b>Energy efficiency</b> The Plan states (point f - page 33) 'It is desired that homes are designed to the highest energy efficiency standards as set out in the Code for Sustainable Homes'</p> <p>livin suggests that achieving the highest level of the Sustainable Code (level 6) for Homes is unrealistic. It requires a carbon neutral development that would need onsite power generation and such a high building standard for the fabric of the home that it is estimated to add about £25k to the cost of a home above the cost of meeting the current Building Regulations. The Government abandoned the standard due to it being too expensive and even the Homes and Community Agency when providing grant support only expect Code 4.</p> <p>It is appreciated that there may be an option to achieve a lower rating if the viability of the scheme is undermined in terms of financial viability or lack of market demand for the products. However, livin suggest that Code 4 should be the highest target expected, with perhaps an air pressure test post construction to prove build quality as it is air leakage which is the downfall in many new homes.</p> <p><b>Affordable Housing</b> Page 50 (Policy GANP H8) on the Plan states that Affordable Housing on sites of 10 more new dwellings will be supported as long as it meets a specific need, has been designed in accordance with the GANP, and contributes to meeting the affordable and social rented needs of residents. However, there is no clear reference to affordable housing in Objective 5 and livin feels that this should be included.</p>
Andrew Whitehead	Natural England	Natural England does not have any specific comments on this neighbourhood plan.
Daniel	Northumbria Water	<b>Subject: Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan- Submission Consultation</b>

Woodward		<p>Northumbrian Water is the statutory water and sewerage undertaker for the North East and we have a duty to provide water and waste water services to the region. As a statutory undertaker in the provision of these services we are a formal consultee on all emerging planning policy. We seek to protect our assets and support new development through ensuring our network and facilities have capacity to accommodate sustainable growth. We work closely with Local Authorities to monitor proposed development and track growth, and our consultation responses to emerging planning policies reflect this. We also seek to promote sustainable design in drainage and water conservation as part of tackling flooding.</p> <p>Previously at pre submission stage of the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan, we noted an omission of any policy relating to sustainable drainage and water conservation for new development. We recommended the following policy to be included in the Neighbourhood Plan:</p> <p><i>Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Policy</i>  <i>Development proposals need to demonstrate the minimisation of flood risk to people, property and infrastructure from all potential sources and demonstrate consideration of the separation, minimisation and control of surface water runoff with sustainable drainage systems being the preferred approach, giving preference to the hierarchy of a). soakaways, or if that is not feasible due to underlying ground conditions; b). a watercourse, unless there is no alternative or suitable receiving watercourse available; c). a surface water sewer; and lastly d). a combined sewer.</i></p> <p>As a statutory consultee for planning policy formulation we feel we play an important role in helping to shape and influence Neighbourhood plans in order to protect the region from increased flood risk through sustainable water management and drainage design. We note that the GANP response to our original consultation comments in Appendix 8 of the Submission draft Neighbourhood Plan states that <b>“A specific SUDS Policy would be covered at a strategic level. Reference made to the need for Sustainable Drainage and SUDS schemes if applicable.”</b> We assume ‘strategic level’ means at the Durham County Local Plan level, however we have significant concerns regarding this. The Neighbourhood Plan is likely to be approved far sooner than the Durham County Local Plan which means it will carry weight, indeed even at the emerging stage in lieu of an adopted Local Plan, a draft Neighbourhood Plan may be accorded some weight. We therefore maintain our position that the Great Aycliffe Neighbourhood Plan should give some policy consideration to sustainable drainage, minimising flood risk through new development and water conservation to a level of detail commensurate with the new development proposed and activity listed within the plan. We hope this omission will be reconsidered at the submission stage.</p> <p>To fully explain the importance of our comments and to help you understand why we continue to request the inclusion of this subject as a policy we would be happy to meet up with plan makers in order discuss sustainable surface water drainage, flood risk and water conservation planning policy. Please do contact us if you wish to discuss this matter further.</p>
Dave McGuire	Sport England	<p>I refer to the above document and your recent consultation with Sport England. Thank you for seeking our views on this matter.</p> <p>The one issue Sport England wishes to raise is in respect of;</p> <p>Policy GANP CH3 Existing Amenity Open Spaces &amp; Recreational Areas</p> <p>For the most this policy reflects paragraph 74 of the NPPF in that it is a protective policy with a presumption against development. However Policy GANP CH3 introduces the additional following exception;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development can help alleviate extensive, long-term on street parking</li> </ul>

		<p>problems for residents and delivery vehicles.</p> <p>Given the way the policy is currently written, a strict interpretation would mean it was acceptable to lose a playing field to development if it alleviated extensive, long-term on street parking problems for residents and delivery vehicles.</p> <p>Such a scenario is not acceptable to Sport England as it does not conform with our policy on the protection of playing field nor national planning policy on the same issue. As such it is necessary for Sport England to object to Policy GANP CH3</p> <p>It would be possible to address Sport England's objection by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Rejigging / rewriting Policy GANP CH3 to make it clear that exception 4 did not apply to playing fields; or</li><li>- Creating a stand-alone policy to deal with exception 4 which did not pertain to playing fields.</li></ul> <p>We trust you will give our objection and suggestion your fullest consideration.</p>
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