

# **Oakenshaw Neighbourhood Plan**

Durham County Council  
Referendum Information Statement  
(Including Information for Voters)

Referendum Date: Thursday 6 May 2021

Polling Station: Methodist Church Hall, Willington, County  
Durham  
Willington Primary School, County Durham

## **About this booklet**

On Thursday 6 May 2021 there will be a referendum on a neighbourhood plan for your area. The referendum will be conducted in accordance with procedures similar to those used at local government elections. This booklet explains more about the referendum that is going to take place and how you can take part in it. In this booklet you can find out about:

- The referendum and how you can take part
- The planning system in England and the Development Plan
- Neighbourhood Plans
- The Neighbourhood Area
- The Oakenshaw Neighbourhood Plan

## **Referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan**

A referendum asks you to vote 'yes' or 'no' to a question.

The question on the ballot paper will be:

**"Do you want Durham County Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Oakenshaw to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?"**

If more people vote 'Yes' than 'No' in this referendum, then Durham County Council will use the Oakenshaw Neighbourhood Plan to help it decide planning applications in the Parish of Oakenshaw.

If more people vote 'No' than 'Yes', then planning applications will continue to be decided without using the Oakenshaw Neighbourhood Plan.

## **What is the Development Plan?**

In England, decisions on planning applications are made by local planning authorities. Those decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

A development plan is a set of documents that contain policies for the development and use of land in a local planning authority area. Durham County Council is the local planning authority for the County of Durham.

### **What is Neighbourhood Planning?**

Neighbourhood planning powers were introduced in the Localism Act in 2011. Their aim is to help local communities play a direct role in planning the areas in which they live and work. Local communities prepare neighbourhood plans which are created to show how the community wants land to be used and developed in its area. When a neighbourhood plan passes a local referendum, it becomes part of the development plan for that neighbourhood area and must be used to help in making decisions on planning applications in that area.

### **Who can prepare a Neighbourhood Plan?**

Within areas containing town or parish councils, they are the only body that can prepare a neighbourhood plan. Where there is no town or parish council a neighbourhood forum can be created to prepare a neighbourhood plan.

In this case, Greater Willington Town Council and the Oakenshaw Community Association led the preparation of the Oakenshaw Neighbourhood Plan.

### **What is a Neighbourhood Area?**

Neighbourhood Areas are areas defined for the purpose of neighbourhood planning. Neighbourhood plans can only be created in formally designated neighbourhood areas. Neighbourhood areas can cover single streets, as well as larger tracts of land in urban or rural areas.

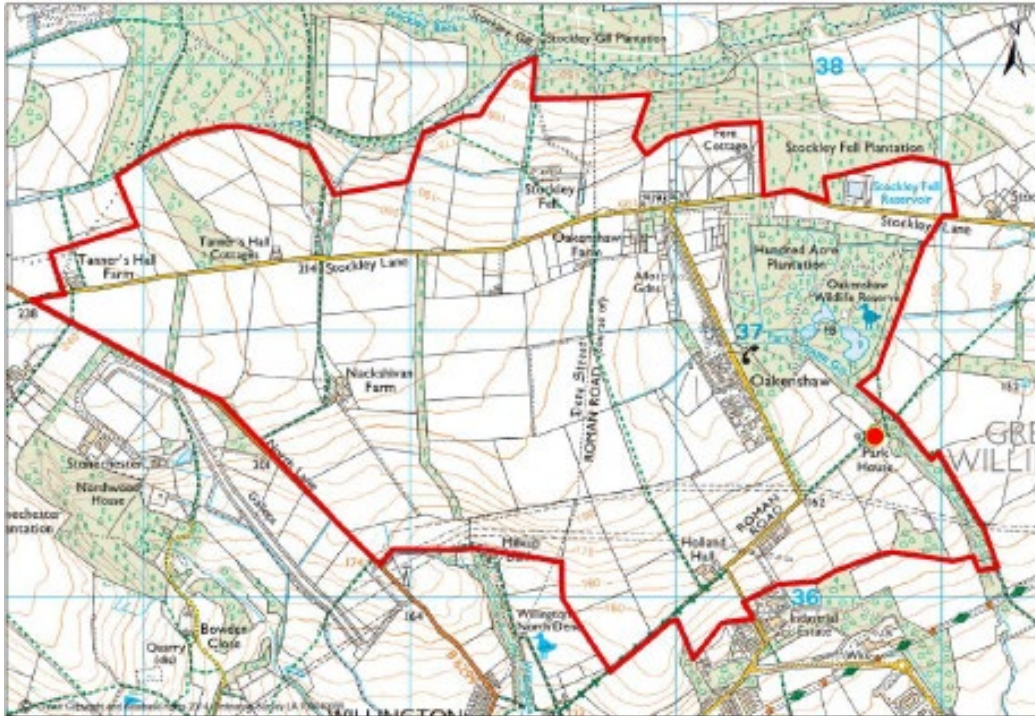
The boundaries of a neighbourhood area are proposed by town or parish councils. This is done by formal application to the County Council who make the decision about designating a neighbourhood area.

The Neighbourhood Area was set by the Oakenshaw Community Association in association with Greater Willington Town Council.

In Oakenshaw, the boundary of the neighbourhood area was approved by Durham County Council on 26 November 2015.

### **Neighbourhood Planning in Oakenshaw**

The Referendum Area is identified on the map in this Information Statement. The Referendum Area is the same as the Oakenshaw Neighbourhood Plan Area.



## Referendum expenses

Expenses can be incurred by an individual or body organising a campaign during the period of the referendum for referendum purposes. There is a limit to the amount that campaigners can spend on their advertising for the referendum.

The Referendum expenses limit that will apply in relation to the Oakenshaw Neighbourhood Plan Referendum is **£2383.72** to each campaign organiser. The number of persons entitled to vote in the Referendum by reference to which the limit has been calculated is **368**

## Specified documents to be published before Referendum

The County Council is required to make available a number of documents relevant to holding the Referendum. These are called the Specified Documents.

The specified documents are:

- Oakenshaw Neighbourhood Plan (version for referendum)
- Report of the Independent Examination

- Summary of the representations sent to the independent examiner
- Summary of Durham County Council representations sent to the examiner
- Statement by the local planning authority that the draft plan meets the basic conditions (The Basic Conditions Decision Statement)
- Statement that sets out general information about the planning system and neighbourhood plans (this statement)

All the above documents can be viewed on Durham County Council's website at:

<http://www.durham.gov.uk/article/18184/Neighbourhood-planning-what-s-happening->

If you would like a hard copy of any of the documents listed please contact the spatial policy team either by email at [spatialpolicy@durham.gov.uk](mailto:spatialpolicy@durham.gov.uk) or telephone 03000 261908.

### **Can I vote?**

You can vote in the referendum if you live in the Oakenshaw Neighbourhood Plan area, and:

- You are registered to vote in local council elections; and
- You are 18 years of age or over on **6 May 2021**

The referendum will be conducted based on procedures which are similar to those used at local government elections.

### **Am I registered to vote?**

If you're not registered, you won't be able to vote. You can check if you are registered by calling our **Helpline** on **03000 261212**.

If you are not registered to vote, you will need to complete a voter registration form and send it to the Electoral Registration Officer to arrive by Monday 19 April 2021 at this address:

**Durham County Council  
County Hall  
Durham  
DH1 5UL**

Registration forms can also be provided by contacting our **Helpline** on **03000 261212** or by emailing [electoralservices@durham.gov.uk](mailto:electoralservices@durham.gov.uk).

You can also register online at: [www.gov.uk/register tovot e](http://www.gov.uk/register tovot e)

## **Ways of voting?**

There are three ways of voting:

### **In person on Thursday 6 May 2021**

At your local polling station: **Methodist Church Hall, Willington or Willington Primary School, County Durham.**

A member of staff will be able to assist if you are not sure what to do.

You will receive a poll card confirming your polling station for this referendum. If you do not receive your poll card, you can contact our Helpline on 03000 261212, or email us at [electoralservices@durham.gov.uk](mailto:electoralservices@durham.gov.uk), to find out where your polling station is.

Polling stations are open from 7am to 10pm.

**You should check which of the above polling stations you are allocated to.**

### **By post**

If you have a postal vote for local elections already, you will receive a poll card confirming this.

If you don't have a postal vote and would like to vote by post you will need to complete an application form and send it to the Electoral Registration Officer to arrive by 5pm on Tuesday 20 April 2021 at this address:

**Durham County Council  
Electoral Services  
Room 1/104-115  
County Hall  
Durham  
DH1 5UL**

You should receive your postal vote about a week before polling day. If it doesn't arrive by Thursday 29 April 2021 you can ask for a replacement by contacting our Helpline on 03000 261212.

### **By proxy**

If you have a proxy vote already you will receive a poll card confirming this.

If you can't get to the polling station and don't wish to vote by post you may be able to vote by proxy. This means allowing somebody you trust to vote on your behalf.

If you don't have a proxy vote and would like to appoint a proxy you will need to complete an application form and send it to the Electoral Registration Officer to arrive by 5pm on Thursday 27 April 2021 at this address:

**Durham County Council  
Electoral Services  
Room 1/104-115  
County Hall  
Durham  
DH1 5UL**

When you apply for a proxy vote, you must say why you cannot vote in person.

Anyone can be your proxy as long as they are registered to vote and are willing to vote on your behalf. You will have to tell them how you want to vote.

As a result of Covid 19, the Government are introducing new legislation to allow those who must self-isolate to be able to appoint an emergency proxy (providing this happened after the deadline for proxy voting – 27 April 2021). If you are required to self-isolate you can apply for an emergency proxy vote up until 5.00pm on 6 May 2021.

### **How to find out more:**

Further general information on neighbourhood planning, including documents relating to the Oakenshaw Neighbourhood Plan, can be found on the County Council's website:

<http://www.durham.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplans>

For queries about planning issues and neighbourhood planning please contact Durham County Council's Spatial Policy Team:

T: 03000 261908

E: [spatialpolicy@durham.gov.uk](mailto:spatialpolicy@durham.gov.uk)

For more information about voting and the arrangements for this referendum, please contact Electoral Services on

**T: 03000 261212**

**E: [electoralservices@durham.gov.uk](mailto:electoralservices@durham.gov.uk)**