

Wild about Aycliffe

The Nature Sites of Great Aycliffe



Credit: www.northeastwildlife.co.uk



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

or visit the Area Action Partnership website at

www.durham.gov.uk

Altogether Better
Durham

Great Aycliffe & Middridge
Partnership



Introduction

Newton Aycliffe was founded in 1948 under the New Towns Act of 1946 and was developed around the general principles of the Garden City movement, which was first founded in 1898 by Sir Ebenezer Howard.

His plan was to create settlements of approximately 32,000 people in 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. Areas include substantial spaces given over to recreational activities including playing fields, parks and more nature 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 4 hectare site is designated a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) due to its unimproved 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, common frogs and toads.



The site 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.

Facilities: 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.

The site is fitted with signage providing a brief description of the sites history, habitats and species. In addition there are several seats available and a substantial pond dipping platform.



Ownership: Great Aycliffe Town Council.

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



Byerley Park Local Nature Reserve

Byerley Park LNR is a typical example of an urban fringe nature reserve located to the western fringe of Byerley Park residential area. This site is a good example of how a valuable wildlife habitat and a place for tranquil relaxation can be developed from farmland. Pockets of wildlife in hedgerows,

copses, ditches and field margins on farmland readily spread out into nearby areas given the right conditions. New woodland planting, wildflower meadow management and pond creation have provide a diverse range of conditions, which has encouraged a rich variety of wildlife.

Facilities: The LNR has 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 sites management and various species which can be found here.

Ownership: 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.

The Great Aycliffe Way

In 1998 the original route of the Great Aycliffe Way was designated around part of the town to commemorate 50 years of the creation of the New Town.

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

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



Agnew Plantation (South)

This mature broadleaf woodland with a substantial understory which covers approximately 25 hectares and 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: There is a surfaced bridleway which runs through the site which forms part of the Great Aycliffe Way.

Ownership: Great Aycliffe Town Council



Cobblers Hall Plantation

This 8 hectare mixed mature woodland varies in character. The area adjacent to the Middridge Road is dominated by Scots Pine but deeper into the site the woodland becomes more varied with mature beech, ash and oak 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 site's natural nature it has limited facilities with only a few wood sculptures located around the site. After periods of rain the footpaths can become waterlogged and muddy in this site.

Ownership: Great Aycliffe Town Council



THE GREEN SPACES

HORNDALE PARK



WOODHAM PARK
COBBLERS HALL PLANTATION

ROUTES OF GREAT AYCLIFFE WAY



WEST PARK



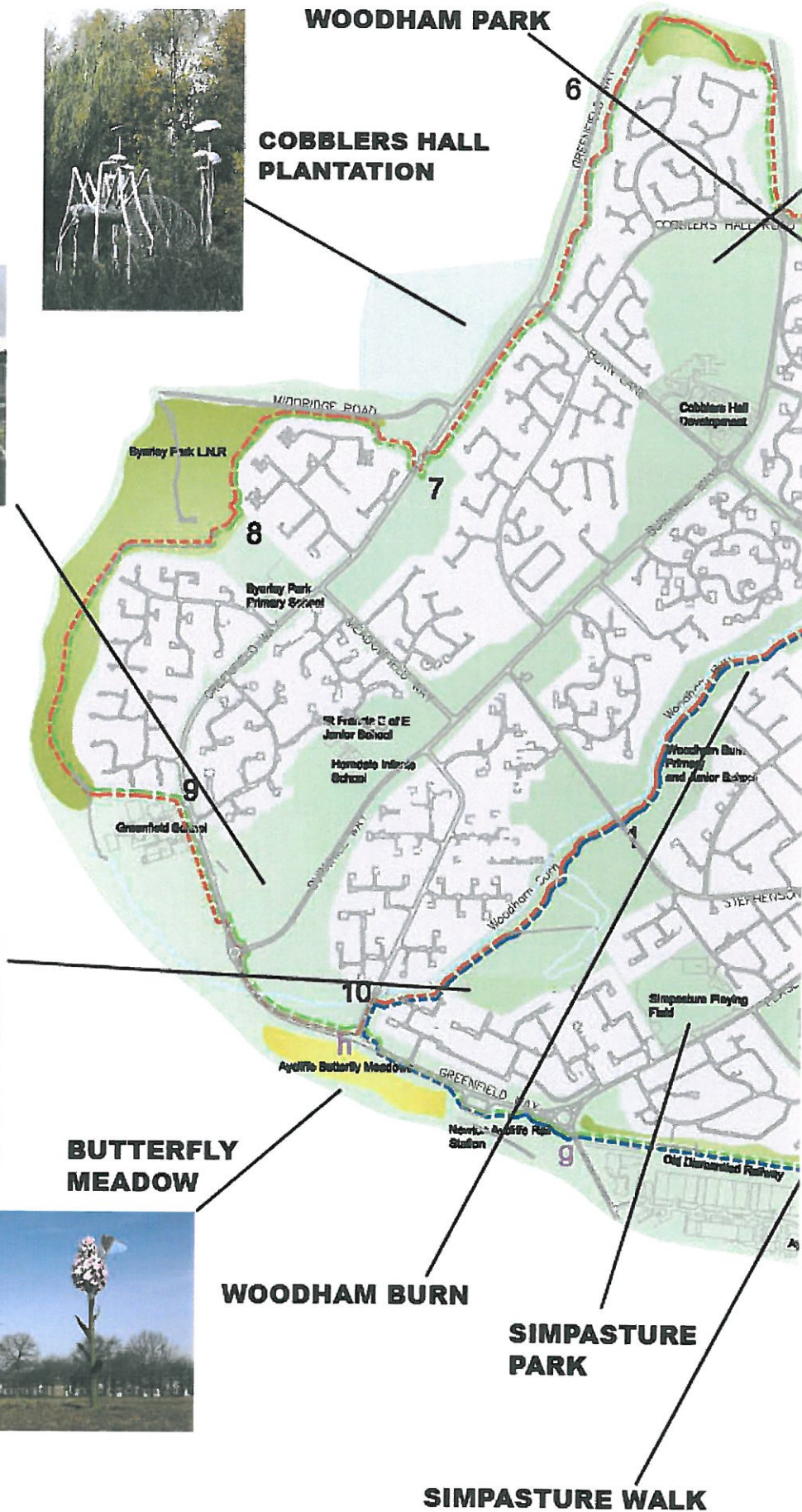
BUTTERFLY MEADOW



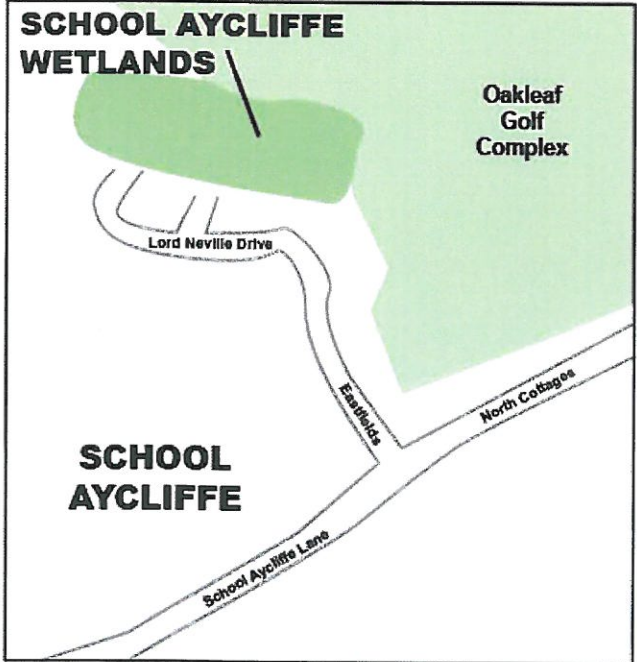
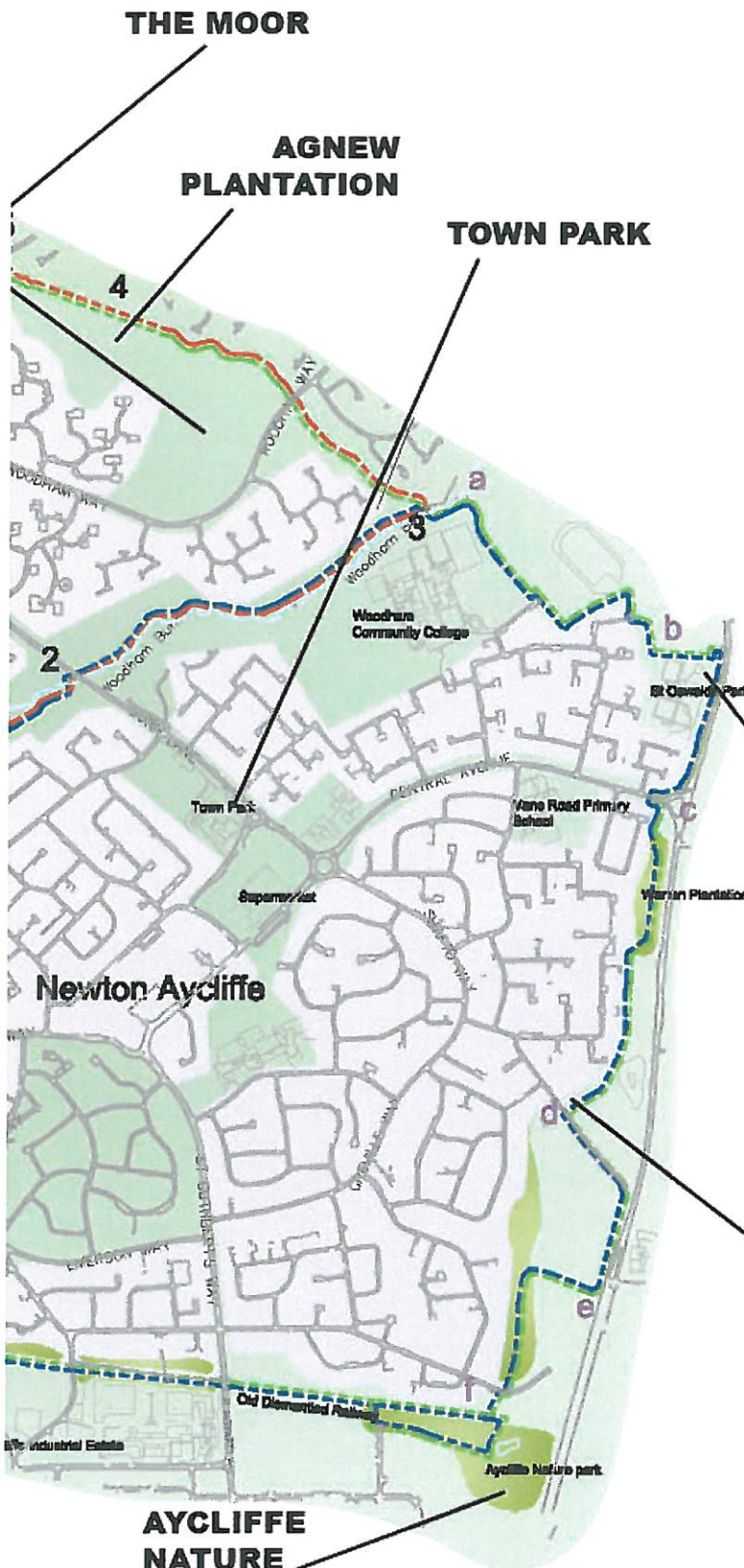
WOODHAM BURN

SIMPASTURE PARK

SIMPASTURE WALK



OF GREAT AYCLIFFE



ST. OSWALD'S PARK



MOORE LANE PARK & ECO CENTRE



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 would have been created.

Facilities: A Public Right of Way and a network of informal paths cross the site.

Ownership: 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 along the 20 hectare site.

Of particular botanical interest is the rig 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 and marsh orchids and great burnet.

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.

Ownership: Great Aycliffe Town Council

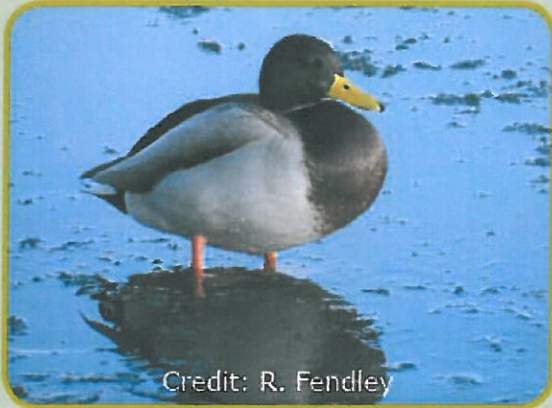


School Aycliffe Wetlands

School Aycliffe Wetland and woodland comprises approximately 8 hectares 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, wildflower meadow and a beck.



Credit: R. Fendley

A variety of wildlife makes this site 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: The site has 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.



Credit: www.northeastwildlife.co.uk

Ownership: Great Aycliffe Town Council





Simpasture Nature Walk

Owing to its history as a former railway which served the munitions factories 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.

The site has naturally developed into mature woodland throughout most of the route. The woodland is mixed deciduous and is dominated by species such as sycamore, crack willow, ash and oak. There is also an understory of scrub species 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 provides an ideal additional winter food source.

Facilities: The site is surfaced to a high standard throughout and has a variety of benches and bins along the route.

Ownership: 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.



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.

Ownership: 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 and Byerley Park 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, Sheilas Garden



Woodham Park



Town Park

CONTACTS

Great Aycliffe Town Council
01325 300700 info@great-aycliffe.gov.uk

Great Aycliffe Town Council - Environment Officer
07779 090 842 steven.cooper@great-aycliffe.gov.uk

Durham County Council Switchboard - 0300 123 7070

Great Aycliffe and Middridge Partnership
01388 816 166 Mr Brian Riley

Durham County Council - Countryside Section
0191 383 3594 rangers@durham.gov.uk

Durham County Council - Rights of Way
0191 383 3239 prow@durham.gov.uk

Aycliffe Nature Park Association - 01325 315182 (Alan Warburton)

Friends of Byerley Park - 01325 315083 (Vince Crosby)

Durham Wildlife Trust - 0191 584 3112 mail@durhamwt.co.uk

Environment Agency
08708 506 506 enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

THE COUNTRYSIDE CODE

Respect - Protect - Enjoy

1. Check weather forecasts before you leave and don't be afraid to turn back.
2. Follow local signs, advice and access restrictions.
3. Leave gates and property as you find them.
4. Litter can be dangerous to wildlife and farm animals - take rubbish home with you.
5. Don't damage or remove rocks, plants or trees - they are homes and food for insects, birds and animals.
6. Wild animals and farm animals can behave unpredictably, especially if they're with their young, so give them plenty of space.
7. Consider others - drive carefully on country lanes and give way to walkers when you're on a bike.