

Witton Gilbert Neighbourhood Plan

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

Referendum Date: Thursday 7th November 2019

Polling Station: Coopers Hall, Witton Gilbert, County Durham.

About this booklet

On Thursday 7th November 2019, 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 Witton Gilbert 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 Witton Gilbert Neighbourhood Plan to help it decide planning applications in the Witton Gilbert neighbourhood area?"

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

If more people vote 'No' than 'Yes', then planning applications will continue to be decided without using the Witton Gilbert 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, Witton Gilbert Parish Council led the preparation of the Witton Gilbert 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.

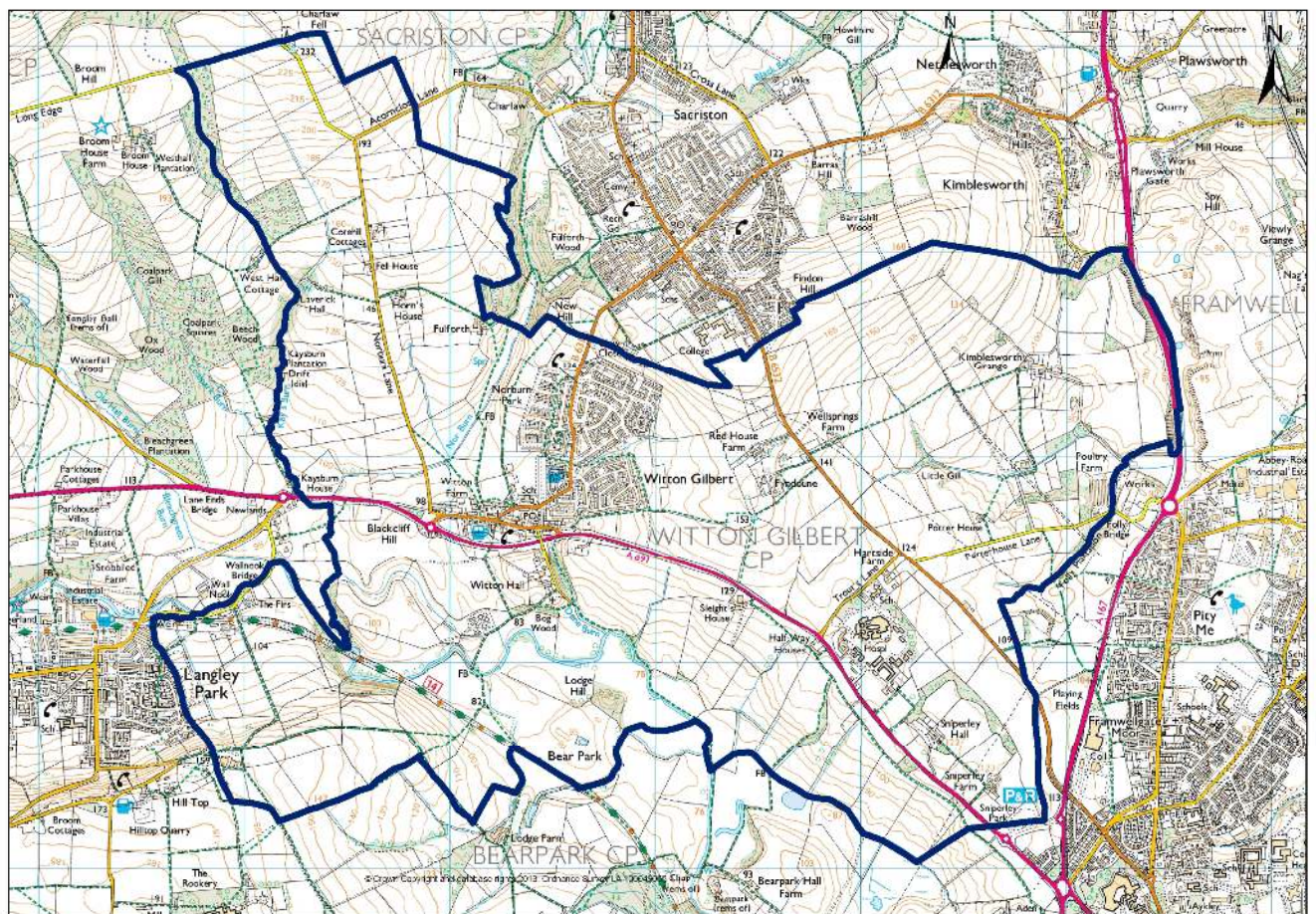
The boundaries of a neighbourhood area are proposed by town or parish councils. This is done by formal application to the County Council who make the decision about designating a neighbourhood area.

Neighbourhood areas normally follow parish boundaries or groups of parishes.

In Witton Gilbert, the boundary of the neighbourhood area was approved by Durham County Council on 18th November 2013 and is the same as the Witton Gilbert parish area.

Neighbourhood Planning in Witton Gilbert

The Referendum Area is identified on the map in this Information Statement. The area comprises the whole of the Witton Gilbert parish area. The Referendum Area is the same as the Witton Gilbert Neighbourhood 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 Witton Gilbert Neighbourhood Plan Referendum is **£2483.19** to each campaign organiser. The number of persons entitled to vote in the Referendum by reference to which the limit has been calculated is **2054** (as at **01/09/2019**).

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. A copy of the specified documents, all of which are identified below, may be inspected at:

- **Durham County Council**, County Hall, Durham, DH1 5UQ
between the hours of **8.30am - 5pm, Monday to Thursday**
(8.30am to 4.30pm on Fridays)
- **Coopers Hall, Witton Gilbert**
between the hours of
Monday 8.30 am – 12.30pm & 1pm – 5pm
Tuesday- Thursday 8.30am – 9.30pm
Friday 8.30 am – 12 Midnight.

The specified documents are:

- Witton Gilbert 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 also be viewed on Durham County Council's website at:

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

Can I vote?

You can vote in the referendum if you live in the Witton Gilbert parish area, and:

- You are registered to vote in local council elections; and
- You are 18 years of age or over on **22 October 2019**.

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 **22 October 2019** 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**.

You can also register online at:

<http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/register-to-vote>

Ways of voting?

There are three ways of voting:

In person on Thursday 7 November 2019:

- At your local polling station:

Coopers Hall, Witton Gilbert, 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, to find out where your polling station is.
- Polling stations are open from 7am to 10pm.

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 23 October 2019 at this address:

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

- You should receive your postal vote about a week before polling day. If it doesn't arrive by 1 November 2019 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 30 October 2019 at this address:

**Durham County Council
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.

How to find out more:

Further general information on neighbourhood planning, including documents relating to the Witton Gilbert 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 261911

E: spatialpolicy@durham.gov.uk

For more information about voting and the arrangements for this referendum, please contact our **Helpline:**

T: 03000 261212

E: electoralservices@durham.gov.uk