



## Ouseburn Futures Constitution

### 1) Name and Area

- a) The name of the Organisation shall be 'Ouseburn Futures'.
- b) The Name of the Organisation for the purposes of Neighbourhood Planning (as set out in the Localism Act 2011) shall be 'Ouseburn Valley Neighbourhood Forum'. The area covered by the 'Ouseburn Valley Neighbourhood Forum' is the 'Ouseburn Valley Neighbourhood Area' as defined on the attached map.

### 2) Purpose, Aims, Objectives and Powers

- a) To promote and improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the Ouseburn Valley.
- b) To oversee the implementation of the existing Ouseburn Regeneration Plan and any potential review or replacement.
- c) To establish a Neighbourhood Forum to undertake the preparation of a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) for the Ouseburn Valley Neighbourhood Area, together with Neighbourhood Development Orders for the area if appropriate.
- d) To involve the whole community within the Neighbourhood Forum area; to gather, analyse and present the views expressed to us by businesses, residents, and visitors; to work alongside Newcastle City Council elected members, and organisations and community groups representing residents or businesses in each of the four wards; and to ensure these powers are carried out in as comprehensive and inclusive a way as possible.
- e) To make sure the focus on investment, regeneration, and development of the diverse and dynamic urban village for the Ouseburn Valley is continued in order to maintain and enhance the physical character of the area, and take account of its Conservation Area status and other heritage assets.
- f) To help to foster community spirit between residents, businesses, organisations, visitors and neighbouring areas; and to carry out any other purposes of community and public benefit.

### 3) Membership

- a) Membership of Ouseburn Futures will consist of:
  - i) 'Forum Members' who satisfy at least one of the requirements of 3(b).
  - ii) 'Ordinary Members' under 3(f).

- b)** Membership of 'Ouseburn Valley Neighbourhood Forum' is open to:
  - i)** people who live within the Ouseburn Valley Neighbourhood Area;
  - ii)** people who work in the Ouseburn Valley Neighbourhood Area (whether for business carried out there or otherwise);
  - iii)** elected members from the wards covered by the Ouseburn Valley Neighbourhood Area (Ouseburn, Byker, South Heaton and South Jesmond);
- c)** Businesses and organisations in the Ouseburn Valley Neighbourhood Area can be members of the Neighbourhood Forum under category 3(b)(ii) and when applying for membership must designate an individual empowered to represent them.
- d)** A minimum membership of 21 Forum Members shall be required, each of whom satisfies at least one of the requirements in 3(b).
- e)** 'Forum Members' as identified in 3(b) will have voting rights in relation to all decisions taken by Ouseburn Futures where applicable.
- f)** 'Ordinary Membership' of Ouseburn Futures is open to individuals and organisations who are not within one of the categories in 3(b) but have an interest in assisting Ouseburn Futures to achieve its aims and objectives. 'Ordinary Members' will not have any voting rights in relation to decisions on Neighbourhood Planning matters at General Meetings.
- g)** Applications for membership shall be made in writing to the Secretary of Ouseburn Futures usually through the completion and signing of an application form. Applicants shall:
  - i)** State where they live or work (as applicable);
  - ii)** State which of the groups set out in 3(b) they belong to (if applicable)
- h)** Ouseburn Futures Co-ordinating Group reserves the right to refuse membership to anyone where it is considered that their membership could be detrimental to the aims, purposes or activities of Ouseburn Futures.
- i)** Each Member of Ouseburn Futures will be identified as a 'Forum Member' or an 'Ordinary Member' as applicable.
- j)** Members must be over 16 years of age.
- k)** Any member may resign his or her membership by notifying the Secretary in writing.
- l)** Once the initial membership has been established additional members may be admitted to Ouseburn Futures at any time with the agreement of the Secretary and Chair. Any dispute in relation to membership will be resolved by the Co-ordinating Group.
- m)** Membership shall initially be for 2 years and thereafter members will be asked every 2 years if they wish to continue membership.
- n)** There shall be no fee for membership.

## 4) Meetings and Groups

### a) General Meetings

- i) Ouseburn Futures will have General Meetings of all members as and when necessary and in any case at least twice per year, one of which will be an Annual General Meeting.
- ii) A Quorum for a General Meeting of Ouseburn Futures will consist of at least 10 Members.
- iii) In relation to decisions on Neighbourhood Planning matters as specified in 5(a), a Quorum of a General Meeting will consist of at least 10 'Forum Members'. Only Forum Members will be able to vote on Neighbourhood Planning matters.
- iv) All Ouseburn Futures members must be notified at least 21 days in advance of a General Meeting.

### b) Co-ordinating Group

- i) The Co-ordinating Group will be formed at the first meeting of Ouseburn Futures in each year.
- ii) The Co-ordinating Group shall comprise:
  - a. 4 'Forum Members' elected at the General Meeting, to include a resident and a representative of a business in each of the Byker and Ouseburn wards;
  - b. 2 members of Ouseburn Trust Board and the Chief Officer of the Ouseburn Trust.
  - c. An elected member from each of the following wards should they wish to attend: Byker, Ouseburn, South Heaton, and South Jesmond.
  - d. A representative of each of the Theme Groups as set out below: Arts and Creative Industries Group, Business and Economy Group, Developers' Forum, Environment Group, Planning and Development Group, River Users' Group, and Valley Events Group.
- iii) The Co-ordinating Group will elect Officers consisting of a Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. The Chair or Vice-Chair shall chair 'General Meetings' and both shall be selected from the list of 'Forum Members'. There will also be a Minutes Secretary, Communications Lead, and Membership Secretary.
- iv) The Co-ordinating Group will meet as and when necessary but at least once every two months.
- v) The quorum for a Co-ordinating Group meeting will be at least 7 members which must include at least one of the Officers.
- vi) The Co-ordinating Group must approve a Neighbourhood Plan for submission to a General Meeting, but work on the development of a Neighbourhood Plan or Neighbourhood Development Orders shall be led by a Steering Committee reporting to the Planning and Development Group.
- vii) Any Member of Ouseburn Futures may attend the Co-ordinating Group meetings to observe and may inspect any papers or minutes of Co-ordinating Group meetings.

**viii)** The Ouseburn Futures Co-ordinating Group will decide on attendance at meetings with the City Council and other external bodies.

**c) Themed Working Groups**

- i)** Decisions about what each theme group does will be the province of the theme groups, as will agreeing their representatives for the Co-ordinating Group. The Co-ordinating Group will act as the clearing house to ensure coordination and avoidance of duplication.
- ii)** The theme groups are generally open to anyone (at the discretion of each group) who wants to contribute to the aims and objectives of the Group, as a starting point for developing other positive activities under each theme.
- iii)** The disbanding, amalgamation or formation of new theme groups or other re-organisation shall be agreed at the Co-ordinating Group after:
  - (a)** the group(s) in question have agreed it, or
  - (b)** at least 10 Ouseburn Futures members put a proposal forward in writing (subject to the theme group being consulted on the proposal).

**d) Decision Making**

Decisions will be made by a simple majority of those present at all meetings. At General Meetings this will apply to those present who have the relevant voting rights. Voting will be by show of hands and in the event of a tied vote the person chairing the meeting will have a second, casting vote.

**e) Non Members**

Non-members (defined as those who are neither Forum nor Ordinary Members) may be invited to meetings of Ouseburn Futures and the Co-ordinating Group and, with the permission of the Chair, may speak and take part in discussions. Non-members will not be eligible to vote on any decisions made at meetings they attend

## **5) Neighbourhood Planning**

- a)** The Co-ordinating Group or the Planning and Development Group may carry out work on developing a Neighbourhood Plan or Development Order (as provided in the Localism Act 2011). Any decision to undertake, consult on, or submit a draft Neighbourhood Plan, or Development Order to the local authority for validation, examination, referendum or adoption must be taken by a vote at a General Meeting of Ouseburn Futures.
- b)** Only Forum Members will be able to vote on Neighbourhood Planning matters at General Meetings i.e. those individuals who meet the criteria in 3(b).
- c)** Should the Forum decide to develop a Neighbourhood Plan, a Steering Committee will be formed to steer the development. There will also be two working groups reporting to the Steering Committee, one to work on plans for the Ouseburn, South Heaton and South Jesmond parts of the Neighbourhood Area, and one to draw people together to work on plans for the Byker part of the Area. The two working groups will work to a jointly-agreed workplan, and all proposals will be agreed by the whole Neighbourhood Forum.

- d) The Steering Committee will include one local councillor (should they wish to attend), two residents, and two business representatives from each of the Ouseburn and Byker wards, and one resident and one business representative of each of the South Jesmond and South Heaton wards, as well as up to 5 other members of the Ouseburn Valley Neighbourhood Forum. The members of the Steering Committee will also sit on one or other of the two working groups.

## **6) Code of Conduct and Complaints**

- a) All members of Ouseburn Futures must abide by the Code of Conduct. Failure to do so may result in membership being withdrawn.
- b) Any complaint about the behaviour of a member of Ouseburn Futures shall be made in writing to the Chair. The Chair and Secretary will investigate the complaint and decide on action as appropriate. If the complaint concerns the Chair or Secretary then other members of Ouseburn Futures will be appointed to investigate in their place by a vote at an Extraordinary General Meeting.
- c) If a member acts in a way that the Co-ordinating Group considers to be prejudicial to the best interests of Ouseburn Futures or the residents/businesses of the area, then the Co-ordinating Group may revoke their membership on the basis of a vote.

## **7) Alteration of the Constitution**

- a) Alterations of parts of the Constitution pertaining to neighbourhood planning and the composition/operation of the Neighbourhood Forum shall be by resolution of the majority of 'Forum members' present and voting at a General Meeting of Ouseburn Futures.
- b) Alterations of parts of the Constitution outside the scope of 7(a) shall be by resolution of the majority of all members present and voting at a General Meeting of Ouseburn Futures.
- c) If any future ward boundary changes would remove one of the named wards from the Neighbourhood Area or add in a new or additional ward, any appropriate changes to the constitution would be addressed at the next General Meeting following the local elections implementing the boundary change.

## **8) Finances**

- a) The Co-ordinating Group may at some time make arrangements to open a bank account in the name of Ouseburn Futures in order to deposit and draw on any funds that might be made available for the use of Ouseburn Futures.
- b) Accounts will be reported to a General Meeting of Ouseburn Futures each year.

## **9) Designation as a Neighbourhood Forum**

- a) The designation as a Neighbourhood Forum will exist for 5 years from the date of designation by the City Council, unless two-thirds of those Forum Members present and voting at a quorate General Meeting agree to dissolve the Forum.

- b) At its Annual General Meeting at the start of the 5<sup>th</sup> year Ouseburn Futures shall consider whether to allow the designation as a Forum to lapse, to apply to remove the designation, or to apply to continue the designation. If it decides to continue, it will consider what its objectives and role will be in the future.
- c) Any decision about designation as a Neighbourhood Forum will have no other impact on the status of Ouseburn Futures.

## **10) Closing down Ouseburn Futures**

- a) The decision to close down Ouseburn Futures must be taken at a General Meeting with at least two-thirds majority of the Members present and voting agreeing to the closure.
- b) Any funds remaining would be transferred to a charity or voluntary organisation with the same or similar aims as Ouseburn Futures has.

## **11) Equality**

- a) Ouseburn Futures will comply with all relevant equality and anti-discrimination legislation and shall not discriminate against any persons on grounds of race, nationality, gender, sexuality, religion, or age.