

Aireborough Neighbourhood Forum

Site Allocations Issues and Options – Employment Response

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has 3 pillars of sustainability, and clearly states (policy 19) that the planning system should give significant support to economic growth.

- 1 Economic** - Strong, responsive, competitive economy - with land to support growth and innovation
- 2. Social** - Strong, healthy, vibrant communities – with housing of the right type in a high quality build environment
- 3. Environment** - Protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment, improving biodiversity.

In compliance with a NPPF core principle and policy 160, the ANF has started to objectively identify the needs of local people for employment, business and job creation – in conjunction with needs for housing and infrastructure. Following ANF research with over 700 local people and businesses from across the area, we find the site allocations issues and options report does not support the ambitions, opportunities and issues in Aireborough regarding economic growth and innovation. Specifically the report :

A. Does not support the NPPF requirement to; make it easier for jobs to be created in towns and villages (policy 9) including removing infrastructure barriers to investment (policy 20, 21)

The vast majority of participants in the evidence gathering want to see more employment in the area: the reasons for this range from the positive opportunity of giving a skilled workforce the opportunity for business start-ups, to a key means of overcoming chronic infrastructure issues such as transport congestion. Aireborough has a higher proportion of professional and technically skilled people, than Leeds as a whole; and, despite, the much higher levels of retired people (16% in Aireborough¹ 12% in Leeds), 10% of the population are self-employed, compared to only 7.5% in Leeds. This is fertile ground for business start-ups and job creation, and the ANF would like to see site allocations reflecting this opportunity for new business – currently they do not.

“Should be more sites generally, encouraging new businesses in particular. But, how will roads/transport/infrastructure support this growth ?”²

“More sites for small industrial unit to start small firms”

B. Does not support the NPPF requirements to identify sites for local and inward investment, plan positively for the expansion of clusters of knowledge driven, hi-tec industry, or facilitate flexible working practices with mixed use sites (policy 20, 21).

We are aware from a number of sources, that there is a significant shortage of suitable sites/buildings for expanding businesses in Aireborough – further research is needed to understand

¹ census statistics are for the Aireborough Neighbourhood Plan Area – excluding the parishes of Rawdon and Bramhope.

² all quotes in red have been made by residents and people who work in Aireborough in response to open questions on the site allocations

just what is required, and why it is not currently available, given that there are unused employment sites in the area. It could be that there is land-banking happening, in the hope of sites being given a more profitable residential status. Or, an expectation that airport expansion will soak up demand. In which case the planning system needs to go hand in glove with an inward investment policy, which has not apparently happened. The facts that no 'call for sites' are coming forward, when so many businesses are growing and seeking bigger/new premises is an issue that needs understanding.

"Before looking at any new sites consideration must be given to the empty and derelict sites which have previously been used for workplaces and the ways in which the many empty retail outlets can be filled, by giving financial incentives to small businesses."

The result of this dearth of suitable sites and investment in them is that businesses are a) constrained from growing, b) considering leaving the area, and c) presumably, not starting-up. Participants in the evidence gathering have specifically identified the need for units for:- workshops, light industry, professional service, technology and environmental companies. Many of these growth business areas are identified in Leeds Partners investment strategy for the City.

The need for hubs and enterprise zones has also been picked out by participants at various stages of evidence gathering - with the Guiseley Station area a potential zone for creative and design businesses, Rawdon Park, Green Lane being a potential zone for technical and light industry, Westfield Mills for small manufacturing and workshops, and the Airport environs (including the Avro site) being a potential science park, and light industry area. There are no hubs or zones indicated on site allocations, despite the fact that it is known (Centre For Cities, *Small business outlook 2013*) that similar and supportive businesses do much better, and are more innovative, when they are located together.

"There needs to be more areas for people to be able to develop businesses eg a hub, and not just low paid shop-worker/factory type jobs"

"There should be more and with careful zone planning space is still available. Kirk Lane Yeadon, Milners Road Yeadon, Green Lane Rawdon. LBA area, Ghyll Royd, Guiseley, and Station Road Guiseley."

"Certainly not enough employment sites near the Leeds Bradford Airport"

In general there is a feeling that both new and existing business areas need to be thought about more innovatively, and a strategy put in place for inward investment, supported by the planning system. The Low Mills area 2802310, for example, is a business area, but has been coloured red, due to contamination issues and lack of development interest; yet has been put on the amber housing map. Whilst there is agreement that it is an amber housing site, the preference is to retain for employment, and to establish how investment can be attracted.

"There should be more [sites], and there should be plans to enhance current employment sites. People need to live and work in an area - or have that choice."

There is also a view that mixed use sites, particularly when old employment sites are being used, are desirable. Sites indicated for this include Springhead Mill in Guiseley, and High Royds,. On the latter, we would not want to see site 2802330 removed from employment site allocation, although

office space might not be the best use for it: a micro-business hub might be more desirable for the location, which was originally supposed to be a village, not a commuter estate!! People would also want to see housing site 1308 Naylor Jennings retained for some-employment activity such as workshops.

“More employment sites are required for Aireborough, eg ex Naylor Jennings site could house small workshops or be developed as a working museum which would be for benefit as an educational facility for Yorkshire and beyond.”

All of these ideas were felt to need supportive infrastructure.

“Needs to be more jobs, light industry, ICT, offices, but this would only be possible if road structure and public transport are improved”

“Employment sites without improved traffic infrastructure will only exacerbate current problems in Aireborough. Develop designated cycle path and transport first, then offer mini enterprise zones for start up businesses at key intersections on this network “

C. Compromises the NPPF requirement for site availability for growing businesses to sustain the vitality of the area (policy 23) by allocating too much available land to just one single use – housing.

There was both regret and annoyance from local people that so much employment land had been turned into housing, and, that just as the area needs more employment to make it vital, that yet more housing is being allocated to what sites are still available. As a strategy, this cannot be comprehended by many, and is seen a foolish short termism producing an unsustainable imbalance in the economy, that had serious repercussions. It is felt that employment contributed to growth in the area, and excessive housing detracted from growth. In general people do not particularly want to see employment sites turn to housing, and then have to take green field sites for employment.

“Utter stupidity! What is the point of filling every possible space with new housing when there is no employment also made available in this area?”

“Now you are talking; there should be more employment sites; common sense prevails !!”

“There should be more employment sites, as there is a major imbalance between housing and employment sites. This is changing the nature of Yeadon, changing it to a dormitory suburb for Leeds.”

D. Does not support the NPPF with regard people living and working in the same area (policy 34, 37 and 38) and thus ensuring a healthy community (policy 70). This latter point is a key aspect in the historic character and distinctiveness of Aireborough

It is strongly felt that skilled employment, and industry in particular, was a characteristic of Aireborough and should be encouraged once again with 21st century growth sectors, in order to maintain an historic community area. The importance of the airport as a support to local industry in doing this - a gateway to exports and logistics, not just as an employer - was mentioned a number of

times. People talk a great deal about jobs for local people who live and work in an area, making it feel united – not giving it the remoteness of commuter land.

“There should be more [employment] Guiseley has become a dormitory town with people going into Leeds to work and only coming home at evening. Industry should be reawoken.”

“There is now far too little employment in Aireborough, many industrial sites have been built on for residential housing so the area has become just a commuter ghetto instead of what it used to be an actual community.”

In our response to the Leeds LDF in February 2013 we stated that Aireborough, with its specific skills, character, and opportunities, should be identified as an area for jobs and business growth (see box below). The Aireborough Neighbourhood Plan vision now has this as a cornerstone for planning. Our site allocations research continues to find strong evidence and support from right across the area for this strategy.

LDF Response Submission – February 2013

Employment – The ANF is pleased with the part Aireborough is playing in the successful Leeds economy, as it has a wealth of skilled people and increasing innovative, creative and entrepreneurial businesses. It welcomes the policy to give equal chances to access jobs and training opportunities through the growth of local businesses. However, the DPD strategy, gives little regard to employment and business needs in Aireborough. With the airport, growing international businesses, and an increased population, Aireborough should justifiably be included as an area for job and business growth. This is backed by a quote from Arup 2012 economic study of LBIA “*The airport is a significant local employer as well as channel for inward investment **and export led growth across high value goods and services**, students and tourism. Currently the airport supports up to 2,800 direct jobs and generates gross value added (GVA) of £102.6 million in direct value. It also acts as the catalyst to a further 320 jobs and £10.8 million of GVA. In total therefore, the airport contribution to the economy is over 3,000 jobs and £113 million of GVA.*”

Specific Questions in the Site Allocation Issue and Options

E 1-3 In general, the green sites are agreed.
The red site 2802310 should be green
The High Royds sites should be green

E4 There are further sites that are suitable for employment of various kinds, but more research and discussion through the neighbourhood planning process is needed to identify such sites in line with the vision and objectives for the neighbourhood plan.

E5 It is generally thought that the airport could act as a catalyst for employment in its environs. They will be working with the ANF to identify just what, where, and how, and with what resource.

**Prepared for the Aireborough Neighbourhood Forum by Jennifer Kirkby
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