

## AIREBOROUGH

### LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS

Aireborough is **borderland**; and area **of urban rural fringe** between urban Leeds/Bradford and rural Wharfedale/Airedale. It is a District in its own right, not Leeds, not Bradford<sup>1</sup>, - a distinctive character area of pastoral plateau and lower glacial valleys<sup>2</sup>, on the north east edge of the South Pennines natural area<sup>3</sup> (36); sandwiched between the Yorkshire Dales (21,22) to the north and the, Coal Measures (38) to the south.

Aireborough, is made up of '**sibling settlements**' - the major settlements (townships) of Guiseley, Yeadon and Rawdon<sup>4</sup>, and the villages of Hawksorth, High Royds and Carlton. Until 1974, Aireborough was an autonomous urban district, formed 'in a spirit of harmony' from the Parish of Guiseley in 1937 in order "to wipe out old jealousies, and concentrate more readily on the problems ahead"<sup>5</sup>. The name Aireborough was chosen by the 1937 Council, in preference to the Parish of Guiseley, so that all townships could feel equal in their collective future. In 1974 Aireborough was subsumed into the City of Leeds, but is surrounded on the north, south and west by Bradford MDC. Making the Duty to Co-operate extremely important in planning terms. It is now a Leeds CC, housing market characteristic area., but it is vital that the individual settlements are recognized.

Aireborough was not an original name when chosen by the first Council, it was in fact a fictional, **wealthy, manufacturing town** in the stories of Charles Darcy Friel, an Irish Inland Revenue Officer, who lived and worked in Leeds in the late 19<sup>th</sup>. Aireborough **has not thrived** since 1974<sup>6</sup>;

*"In the 42 years I have lived in Guiseley I have watched it slowly become over-populated and in all honesty a nightmare to get into and out of... there are more and more residential developments in progress, so life is only going to get worse... I used to love living here... now it's a means to an end..."<sup>7</sup>*

The area sits on the millstone grit of the South Pennines, in a landscape shaped by **human endeavour** since pre-historic times. Local stone features in the drystone walls, solid gritstone buildings , and stone surfaces- as well as from the pre-historic stone monuments<sup>8</sup> to the foundations of the Houses of Parliament. Local stone, should be used wherever possible in the built environment and for distinctive structures. The area has prominent, exposed, high pastoral plateaus above glacial valleys covered in boulder clay and meadows; views of the higher levels from the built areas, give a distinctive 'countryside' connection<sup>9</sup> – building in areas where the landscape view preserves this rural feel is inappropriate to local distinctiveness. It is important, that a 'countryside connection' is also reflected in the openness of the lower levels – fingers of green reaching into the built environment, acting as green infrastructure and habitat corridors giving easy access to 'natural countryside' should be a design feature<sup>10</sup>, especially as the area is short of 'internal' green space<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Living in Aireborough 2013

<sup>2</sup> Leeds Landscape Assessment 1994

<sup>3</sup> Natural England Character Areas, with their numbers

<sup>4</sup> Rawdon and Carlton are in the HMCA but not in the Aireborough Neighbourhood Plan area.

<sup>5</sup> Yorkshire Post 2 December 1936.

<sup>6</sup> Living in Aireborough 2013. 2013 SAP Issues and Options Research.

<sup>7</sup> Local resident 2015

<sup>8</sup> See UDP and Heritage England for locations

<sup>9</sup> Living in Aireborough p4

<sup>10</sup> Prof Alister Scott, Urban/Rural Fringe Research

As the land dips to the River Aire, and Guiseley Gap floor, native woodland increases; in copses, woods and along tree/hedge lined roads, becks and greenways – Esholt Springs wood<sup>12</sup> is an important and distinctive area. Street level trees, copses and traditional hedges, should be considered in design to maintain this defining characteristic. Having a list of relevant plants for new developments to choose from would also help in creating a relevant setting – as developers landscaping plans tend to be rather ‘urban’ in planting choice. Traditional routes used for travelling to church, market, and mill or dispersed farmsteads, cut across the town and landscape – these should be made a feature to create attractive walking and cycling routes<sup>13</sup>, to relieve traffic on the A65 – also to link with the main path through the North West Leeds Country Park area<sup>14</sup>.

Water is a key natural resource, in the form of becks, tarns, wetlands, springs, mill ponds and wells . Naturally the water drains from the area’s plateaus to the River Aire, but also the Wharfe – each of the major settlements is divided by a beck, and there are opportunities to make more of the water features in the area for boundaries, and ecology through surface water management<sup>15</sup>.

Aireborough contains the important geographic features of, The Chevin<sup>16</sup>, the Guiseley Gap (glacial valley branching off from the Wharfe Valley), Rawdon Billing, Yeadon Banks, Whale Jaws Hill, The Odda, and Yeadon Tarn. There is an SSSI and SEGI on Hawksworth Moor, and another SSSI at Yeadon Brickworks and Railway Cutting<sup>17</sup>. Historic cultivation features are also of note in places close to the urban area<sup>18</sup>. Aireborough should take care to maintain its ‘inspiring’ landscape features for their cultural value and the contribution they make to local distinctiveness and sense of identity, as this aids both wellbeing, and outstanding achievement. .

From an ecology perspective, there are natural wetlands, and Esholt Springs Woods as well as xxxxxx. The areas has a number of local nature areas, and we wish to expand and connect those to enhance the ecology and the environment. <sup>19</sup>

Aireborough’s settlement pattern is haphazard, made up of distinctive ‘quarters’, rather than historic towns that have built out from a core; this pattern is reflected in the variety of conservation areas. This mirrors the historic patterns of isolated farmsteads and small communities that would have originally sat in the landscape. The fairly dense built area has eroded township boundaries and created sprawl – a pattern accentuated by the many mills turned into housing estates since 2000. Leeds CC, wrongly see the green belt boundary as the settlement boundary, this denigrates local distinctiveness<sup>20</sup>. However, these quarters could be made an important feature of the area with design and placemaking<sup>21</sup>, enhancing the distinctiveness of each one, but linking though a network of walkways, cycleways, and community gathering spaces. Even the areas of 20<sup>th</sup> century council housing eg Westfield, and Queensway, some of which are classed as deprived<sup>22</sup>, could be enhanced with ‘placemaking’ intent. Aireborough is therefore not an area that should be ‘rounded off’ in

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<sup>11</sup> ANF research on green space looking at LCC Green Space Audit

<sup>12</sup> BMDC Landscape Character – Esholt

<sup>13</sup> Leeds Public Rights of Way Database

<sup>14</sup> See North West Leeds Country Park, of which Aireborough is part.

<sup>15</sup> Idea from Tom Lonsdale, in his Landscape Character work with ANF

<sup>16</sup> Dip slope

<sup>17</sup> See Leeds UDP 2006

<sup>18</sup> See Historic England database

<sup>19</sup> See Leeds UDP 2006

<sup>20</sup> Leeds UDP 2006

<sup>21</sup> See Report on Nether Yeadon Conservation area appendix 1 point 7(2)

<sup>22</sup> 2011 Census Data

design terms. Ideally we would like signs at the ‘entrances’ to Aireborough, saying Guiseley in Aireborough, Yeadon in Aireborough etc.

Aireborough is rightly, (as fairly dense, sprawling, urban/rural fringe), tightly encased by Green Belt to the north, east, south and west, some of which is designated special landscape area (the majority was special landscape area until the mid 00’s when it was dedesignated for reasons unknown.) . In a Leeds Planning Report of 2007 it was concluded that *“Guiseley is protected by a tight green belt boundary and it is important that it remains so, as it prevents Guiseley from becoming an extension of suburban Leeds or merging with Bradford.”* The green belt is also important as a countryside setting as detailed in the many conservation reports.

Aireborough conservation areas range from the early medieval to 20th century<sup>23</sup>. The main townships of Guiseley, Rawdon and Yeadon grew into industrial textile and manufacturing townships from their medieval farming/weaving origins. The smaller areas of Nether Yeadon, Carlton, and Hawksworth still retain their pre-industrial character. High Royds was a former Victorian Mental Hospital for sanctuary which was turned into a village in the beginning of the 21st century – a conversion that has not been altogether successful. Aireborough, in common with the South Pennines Heritage area, was an important area for social developments such as non-conformist religion (e.g. Quakers, Baptists and Methodists), co-operative movements and philanthropy from a chain of self-made men who, from the nineteenth century, donated public buildings and facilities e.g. Jonathan Peate. The area has been home to a number of famous ‘self made’ businesspeople, sportspeople and others entertainers. More could be done to conserve and promote this heritage in order to create distinctiveness, and inspire residents and visitors<sup>24</sup>. Space should be found for a ‘cultural’ centre to enhance civic society – names of new places or streets should reflect this specific local culture, including ‘significant personalities’, and distinctive family names.

Aireborough traditionally was self-contained (ie sustainable) with a wealth of industry; but it has undergone significant change since 2000. Much of the industrial land and High Royds hospital has been replaced by over 2,200 new houses pushing up the population, which has had a significant impact on the character, put a strain on infrastructure, and increased traffic congestion<sup>25</sup>. The population used to live and work in the area, socialising in small clubs, and societies, but the changes have brought an increasing pattern of commuting to Leeds for work. This needs to be addressed, the area does not wish to become a suburban dormitory<sup>26</sup>. Community spaces to build new traditions and civic events are needed to bring what are becoming isolated communities together<sup>27</sup> – The Station Pub is Guiseley is an example of a new ‘informal’ community space. .

The population of Aireborough is xxx, the population has risen by xxx between 2001 and 2011, and however the populations of Guiseley rose by 11%.<sup>28</sup> Little by way of new infrastructure has been added to accommodate this population change. Socio-economic profile shows a population that is more professional and skilled than that of Leeds in general. However, there are areas of deprivation. The population is also older than Leeds in general, but the last decade has seen a growth in the number of children. In terms of working households in Aireborough 29% earn less than £20000 p.a. whilst 26% earn £50,000 or more. In terms of unemployment, there was an unemployment rate of 1% in 2014 (claimants of working population).

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<sup>23</sup> See the range of conservation assessments

<sup>24</sup> ANF Living in Aireborough

<sup>25</sup> 2007 Report on Guiseley, ANF Living in Aireborough, 2013 SAP Issues & Options

<sup>26</sup> Neighbourhood Plan Vision

<sup>27</sup> Living in Aireborough

<sup>28</sup> 2011 Census Data

Aireborough has a range of micro and SME private businesses working alongside the big brand chains that have opened in the area since 2000. An attraction of the area for business is the landscape, location, and skilled labour force. Aireborough used to have a range of top brand names including Shires (Bathrooms), Silver Cross (Prams), Crompton Parkinson (lamps and motors), and Wendy Wools - not forgetting Harry Ramsden's original Fish and Chip shop. However, since 2000 most of the bigger industry has left; Leeds Bradford International Airport is now one of the biggest employers, but there are also a range of growing, thriving SMEs, who want to remain in the area – in essence, the old textile industries are being replaced by design, digital, professional services industries – if they can find the right locations, and this is an issue. Where there is still a textile industry, it now produces luxury and quality fabrics eg Abraham Moon. The masterplan should look to build distinctive ‘business’ quarters for different types of enterprise; the opportunity should also be taken to build micro-business hubs and shared offices, for the smaller business and entrepreneurs. The growth of Leeds Bradford Airport suggests that the area needs to take advantage by building a visitor economy.<sup>29</sup>

Serving the area are Guiseley and Yeadon town centres and two local centres, Oxford Road, Guiseley and Leeds Road, Rawdon, as well as two retail parks in Guiseley which have added to the traffic congestion on the A65. The area is served by public transport links to Leeds City Centre along the A65 (which cuts Rawdon and Guiseley in two) and Bradford and Harrogate along the A658 and the A6038. Guiseley has a railway station which is on the Wharfedale line, and whose attraction is turning the area around the station into a car park during the day. To the east of Yeadon is Leeds Bradford International Airport, an important transport hub for Leeds and the city region, but which has very poor transport links.

Neighbourhood plans are being prepared by Rawdon Parish Council (for Rawdon) and the Aireborough Neighbourhood Development Forum, for the rest of the area apart from Carlton which is in Bramhope Parish.. The vision for Aireborough in the ANDF plan addresses some of the issues indicated above –

## Ode to Aireborough

"Home of Harry Ramsden's and delicious fish and chips,  
Exquisite prams produced by Silver Cross,  
Baths and loos and bidets manufactured down at Shires,  
And lamps where Crompton'n Parkinson were boss.

Weaving sheds that sang as looms clacked out their ryhthmic beat,  
And spinners whirling floss to balls and cones,  
Dyers dunking yard in massive vats of different hues,  
Some bound for distand places to be sewn.

Once, a couple of co-ops and two picture houses too,  
A gas works for the cooking and the heat,  
A depot up in Yeadon where Sam Ledgard's busses lived,  
And don't forget young Sooty, Sue and Sweep.

They've all gone now; that's progress, so the bods in charge would say,  
The heart of Aireborough beats a different beat,

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<sup>29</sup> Various reports on local employment opportunities ANF, DTZ, Be Group

We have to be content with traffic jams and retail parks,  
The thought of it is somewhat bittersweet.

Despite all this I'm happy, even though I've seen much change,  
The folk of Aireborough make this place so good,  
They're cheeful, and industrious and caring to a fault,  
Without doubt its' the perfect neighbourhood."<sup>30</sup>

## Our Vision

Honouring the Past; Valuing the Present; Imagining the Future

*To stimulate identity in order to sustain vitality in this family of 'sibling' settlements; to live, work and grow into a new modern economy together, as a unique cornerstone of Leeds City's region and the proposed South Pennines National Area. To resist becoming a suburban dormitory.*

## Planning Policy

National Planning Policy (NPPF) states that planning should take account of 'core planning principles' (point 17). One of those principles is

*"to take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it"*

For a number of years since the inception of the NPPF in April 2012, these principles have taken a back seat, to NPPF policy 14 which says there is a '*presumption in favour of sustainable development*'. Basically this has meant that development has been given the green light, unless there have been any significant reasons of harm to outweigh the benefit of new housing.

## REFERENCES (all reports if not linked should be on our website under training and reference, if not there they will be in dropbox, and we will send you a link to that)

**ANF 'Living in Aireborough Research Synthesis' (2013)**

**ANF 'Leeds SAP Issues and Options Research Report' (Sept 2013)**

**ANF 'Responses to Issues and Options, Housing & Employment (July 2013)**

**BE Group 'Assessment of Employment Needs for North West Leeds' (June 2015)**

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<sup>30</sup> Yeadon Writers – for Aireborough Festival 14 Feb 2015

**BMDC** 'Landscape Character' Vol 2 Esholt (2008)

**BMDC** 'Character Landscape' Vol 8 Wharfedale (2008)

**DCLG** 'National Character Area Profiled: Data for Local Decision Making' (2014) .

**DTZ** 'Leeds Bradford International Airport. Commercial Hub Assessment' (November 2014)

**LCC** 'Aireborough Green Space Audit' (2010)

**LCC** 'Conservation Reports for – Guiseley, Yeadon, Nether Yeadon, Tranmere Park'

**LCC** 'Guiseley Consultation' (2007)

**LCC** 'Landscape Assessment' (1994)

**LCC** Plans for North West Leeds Country Park

**LCC** 'Public Rights of Way Database'

**Leeds Observatory or ONS** '2011 Census Data'

**Pennine Prospects.** 'A heritage strategy for the South Pennines' (2001)

**Scott Alister** 'Disintegrated development at the rural-urban fringe' (Birmingham University 2013 )  
<http://www.bcu.ac.uk/built-environment/about-us/our-staff/alister-scott>

**West Yorkshire Ecology** 'Various maps on habitats and designated sites'

## PHOTOGRAPHS

**ANF** Aireborough Place Making Walks, and other sources (2012 – 2015)

**Darren Sanderson** Gallery <https://aireboroughnf.wordpress.com/2015/06/17/view-a-love-story-to-aireborough/>