

**A Case to support the designation of  
Silverdale Avenue Allotments  
(Coach Road Allotments)  
As a Local Green Space**



**A submission to Leeds City Council  
by Silverdale Action Group in Conjunction with  
Aireborough Neighbourhood Development Forum.  
October 2015**

## **OVERVIEW**

Silverdale Action Group is a group of likeminded Guiseley residents who are extremely concerned about the loss of Green Space in Guiseley due to the over development that has already taken place and the prospect of losing even more local green space under the proposals of the current Sites Allocation Plan. In particular the fact that the vast majority (79%) of ear marked sites in Aireborough is Green Belt and Green Space.

A meeting in April 2015 of 150 concerned residents from the area showed the strength of feeling and whilst we cannot accurately reflect every individual's particular point of view, we are confident that this report reflects the views of the majority of residents living on the Silverdale estate, whose homes number approximately 500, including Coach Road and surrounding areas. The application is supported by the Aireborough Neighbourhood Development Forum who are designated to do the Neighbourhood Plan for the Aireborough NP area.

The proposed loss of Coach Road Allotments to housing, even on part of the site, will have an adverse effect on the wellbeing and "feel good" factor of residents, as well as, depriving many of them the pleasure of observing the varied wild life that the allotments bring to this central area of Guiseley

By protecting and preserving this existing green space, future generations of Silverdale and other Guiseley residents will be able to enjoy and appreciate this little idyll in the town's central area of Guiseley

For more information or contact, email; [silverdaleag@gmail.com](mailto:silverdaleag@gmail.com) or [airboroughnp@gmail.com](mailto:airboroughnp@gmail.com).

## **PURPOSE OF THE SUBMISSION**

The purpose of submitting a case to preserve Coach Road Allotments as a Local Green Space is to ensure that this parcel of land remains as a "green space" and is of a special character. That it is not lost to the ever expanding housing sector that is completely crushing the character and individuality of parts of old Guiseley. By protecting and preserving our existing green space, the next generation of Guiseley residents will be able to enjoy and appreciate this little idyll in the centre of Guiseley.

It is the aim of this submission to point out how local residents will be disadvantaged if this green space is taken away from them and denied the benefits that the land is providing, also to show how strong the feeling is amongst our residents to retain this precious asset.

## **HISTORY OF THE SITE**

The origins of the site can be traced back to at least the early 1600's when it was common land used for the grazing of oxen. It was then a large expanse of grass land to the south of the village, incorporating what is now Green Bottom.

Eventually part of Ox Close became the property of St. Oswald's church and it was then known as Far Ox Close and Near Ox Close. The reference numbers on the Tithe Map at that time being, 766 and 767. In 1893 Ordnance Survey maps were being made and the OS reference for the field, later to become the allotments was 535.

The Close of land then known as Ox Close and containing 11 acres, 1 rood and 7 perches, equal to about 4.571 hectares, was sold by the Church to Jonathan Peate, a local mill owner who bought many plots of land locally as well as property. Jonathan Peate died in 1924 and in about 1928; parcels of land were sold to private owners to form an Allotment Society. It is thought that preference for the allotment plots was given to veterans of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War.

Ordnance Survey maps of 1934 show the whole site divided into 24 plots of land.

Over the following years a bustling community of allotment owners developed, committed to raising livestock and growing garden produce in support of their families. The allotments or pens as they were known were used as small holdings where some owners raised a variety of livestock including, cows, sheep, pigs, goats and horses as well as smaller animals such as rabbits, hens, ducks, pigeons and even fancy birds. For many years pigeon racing was a very popular past time in the Aireborough area and pigeon racing clubs were common place across Yorkshire and the Dales with races regularly starting from points on the continent.

Over recent years only some of the allotments have been regularly used, still for growing produce and for keeping animals, such as horses, pigeons, hens and

ducks. The remaining land is unused and has evolved back to a natural habitat of small woodland, hedgerows and grass land and a small stream now attracting wild animals, insects and also water based animals and insects. The whole area provides a quiet and tranquil green space full of life, with many natural types of flora and fauna, which can be located only 2 minutes by car and 5 minutes on foot from the crowded and congested main shopping area of Guiseley.

The allotment site encourages wild life providing an oasis of land which acts as a buffer zone between country side and town.

## **LOCAL GREEN SPACE DESIGNATION**

The Department for Communities and Local Government introduced a new Local Green Space designation (LGS) this enables communities to identify and protect areas that are felt to be of value to the local community.

To this end, in order to designate Coach Road Allotments as LGS, the area must meet certain Local Green Space criteria.

1) Reasonably close proximity to the community it serves.

The position of Coach Road Allotments is within 5 minutes walking time and an approximate 2 minute drive from the centre of Guiseley giving easy and quick access to anybody to visit.

2) Demonstrably special to a local community

a) Beauty of the site.

Many people enjoy the expanse of rough terrain which attracts many species of wild animals and birds of great interest to many residents, who are keen to enquire about the animals that are in abundance on the land. The decision by some of the owners to clear their land has not deterred the wild life from returning and it has been an opportunity for the wild flowers and shrubs to regenerate in order to provide a beautiful and interesting landscape.

b) Historical Significance.

The allotments, historically have been used as small holdings, and as such are a much diverse and loved panorama of activity of both allotmenters and the wild life, not found so close to the centre of Guiseley anywhere else in the local area. This feature is very unique and appreciated by many.

The land has been used as allotments, since the early 1920's when a local mill owner bought the land, to be used as small holdings for the benefit of WW1 veterans. The recreational value to many people over the years has been immense. Generations of families have enjoyed the pleasures that a small holding can give, allowing a diverse range of outdoor activities to be undertaken, such as; pig breeding, pigeon racing and breeding, poultry keeping, vegetable growing and showing as well as prize-winning flowers.

#### c) Recreational Value

The allotments are still used for growing vegetables, fruit and flowers, giving pleasure and exercise to the allotment holders. Ducks and hens are also reared on site, with their eggs being used and the surplus being distributed locally. The whole site of approximately 10 acres holds a special importance to the local residents, who enjoy feeding, observing and photographing the many species of birds and wild animals that frequent, live and breed on the site. Passers-by observe with a great deal of interest, the activities that are continuously ongoing. Many express a wish to be able to use some of the un-used allotments, an opportunity denied to them by absentee owners who choose not to sell or rent out their sites.

#### d) Tranquillity

The expanse of wild nature provides a welcome oasis of calm where people are able to stroll into the centre of the "green space" to observe and quietly reflect, away from the bustling energetic, over-crowded urban life that is only a few hundred metres away.

#### e) Richness of Wildlife - Please see Appendices (i) and (ii)

The 10 acres is rich in wild life that thrives in the surroundings. Old established mixed hawthorn hedges, once forming original farmers' field boundaries provide food, breeding sites and shelter to native birds and animals attracted to the area because of the un-spoilt, natural habitat, where they are able to forage, breed and live without alarm or distress, succumbing only to natural predators, such as; Carrion Crow, Kestrel, Owls and Bats. The land provides a rich diversity of wild life which could be ideal for the local schools to take advantage of, as a possible nature trail for students to appreciate a natural habitat.



## **LOCAL CHARACTER**

The whole 10 acres (approximately) is well defined with clear boundaries with low walls of local stone but at the same time is adjacent to established open country side which attracts the varied wild life in towards a residential area which gives a lot of pleasure to many residents.



## **SURVEY OF WILDLIFE ON SITE**

Many residents, living near to the allotments have reported seeing a variety of wild life in and around the site which are no doubt attracted to the area because of the un-spoilt, natural habitat, where they are able to forage, breed and live without alarm or distress, succumbing only to natural predators. The allotments provide a rich variety larder for the permanent wild life and seasonal migrants alike because of the peaceful surroundings.

Please see Appendix (i) for a compilation of wild life identified on and around the allotments by local residents.

## **SURVEY OF FLORA ON SITE**

There has always been a good mix of trees and shrubs on the allotments, many over 60 years old. Recently, the felling of 6 Poplar and other larger trees was carried out by the owners of some of the allotments, which, although regrettable, could prove useful to regenerate new and varied growth and still provide interest to local residents. Some of the old field boundary markers still remain which were in existence before Silverdale Estate was formed providing a natural old established setting for the variety of wild life living in the hedgerows.

Please see Appendix (ii) for a compilation of flora on site

## **TESTIMONIALS/TRIBUTES**

A great many local residents have expressed concern about the possible destruction of the allotments, a site that they regard as their resident natural reserve. They do not want the land to become part of the ever growing built-up housing expanse that has taken place in Guiseley in recent years. Most are horrified at the thought of the destruction of such a beautiful open space and will welcome either the restoration of useful allotments or the preservation of the area as green space. Either option would preserve the wild life and provide a local sanctuary which can be permanently enjoyed by countless people for many years to come.

Please see Appendix (iii) for a number of testimonials, tributes and memories.

## **SUMMARY and the FUTURE**

It is abundantly clear; many residents do not want to see the destruction of Coach Road allotments. The fact that an open green space is within a short walking distance from their homes is regarded as a great asset, many families relocating to this specific location because of the open aspect that the allotments and Coach Road fields give to their surroundings.

The allotments are enjoyed by a wide variety of residents, and particularly enjoyed by the school children who pass twice a day on their way to school and back, who take great pleasure in looking out for the mischievous ducks and the hens. Many of them will enjoy the benefit of eating the free range eggs for their breakfasts. There was a time when organised groups of school children and Cub Scouts visited the allotments and given an awareness of the care and responsibilities of raising poultry and pigeons, this practice could be undertaken once more if the area is made into a Local Green Space.

The loss by development of this unique green space will be felt by many if carried out. We feel the developers and officials are not in a position to appreciate the full extent of the passion local people have to prevent the destruction of a much valued green refuge near to their homes.

The regeneration of the land has been partially helped by the actions of some of the absent owners clearing much of their land, although the extent of clearance shocked many residents and was felt to be unnecessary. It will however, facilitate the re-generation of the land, either back to the designated use of allotments or simply saved as a natural refuge, where local gardeners may then use the land as it should be used, keeping the area as a green space. If the absent owners are not willing to co-operate in this task, this could be achieved by LCC insisting that the land is to be used as it should be used and not retained as waste un-used ground.





Ducks enjoying the wet weather on the allotments





A country lane in the centre of Guiseley

## **APPENDICES**

### APPENDIX (i).

#### Birds.

Barn Owl	Black Birds	Black Cap
Black Headed Gull	Blue Tit	Brambling
Bullfinch	Buzzard	Carrion Crow
Chaffinch	Chiff Chaff	Coal Tit
Collared Dove	Common Redpoll	Curlew
Dunnock	Feral Pigeon	Fieldfare
Gold Crest	Gold Finch	Great Black Backed Gull
Grt. Spotted Woodpecker	Great Tit	Greenfinch
Grey Heron	Herring Gull	House Sparrow
Jackdaw	Jay	Kestrel
Long tailed tits	Magpie	Mallard Duck
Mistle Thrush	Nuthatch	Red Kite
Redwing	Robin	Siskin
Song Thrush	Sparrow Hawk	Starling
Swallow	Swift	Tawny Owl
Tree Creeper	Waxwing	Willow Warbler
Wood Pigeon	Wren	

#### Butterflies

Orange tip	Peacock	Cabbage White
Speckled Wood	Red Admiral	Painted Lady

### Mammals

Fox	Hedgehog	Grey Squirrel
Pipistrelle Bats	Moles	Shrews
Brown Rat	Voles	Mice
Roe Deer		

### Amphibians

Common Toad	Common Frog	Smooth Newt
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### Insects

Bees	Wasps	Leaf Cutting Bees
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## APPENDIX (ii)

### Trees

Rowan	Horse Chestnut	Pear
Apple	Sweet Chestnut	Silver Birch
Eucalyptus	Sycamore	Hawthorne
Willow	Cob Nut	Cherry
Common Ash	Mountain Ash	

## APPENDIX (iii)

Here are some reminiscences of times spent on and about the allotments.

1) We've lived on Silverdale Ave now nearly 32 years, what seemed to be one the most perfect areas in the Leeds district seems to me, now to be coming to its end, the congestion on the A65 alone at this moment in time, is beyond anything imagined.

But getting back to the allotments, which I thought was a kind of an English/British tradition to have in communities so that anyone wishing to grow their own fruit and veg could apply to have a plot or patch so you could have this enjoyable time growing your own greens etc.

But no, Planners don't want us to have all this anymore. I don't understand what going wrong with this country it seems to be losing it, giving a little back to the community doesn't come into the factor.

For me and in my opinion all that's happening is chaos it unbelievable.

John Backhouse. Guiseley

## 2) To Whom it may Concern

In support of the application to give the Silverdale Allotments the designation of a public Green Space.

My Memories of the Silverdale Allotments.

I have lived on Silverdale Avenue, opposite the allotments, since March 1981, that is 34.5 years. There was once a small riding school on the allotments.

The mobile Farrier used to come in an open back van and set up his brazier and anvil, on the pavement, on Silverdale Avenue, near the gate to the allotments and bring out the horses one at a time and shoe them. When my children were young we used to go across the road and watch him. We also used to go across the road to see Jack Field and the pigeons in his lofts. He used to explain to my children how the pigeons ate and why they needed grit to aid their digestion system and how they know their way back home by the sun.

Parked along Silverdale Avenue used to be two small trailers, one emerald green and one pink, with air vents in the sides, to carry baskets of pigeons to race meetings. I think they belonged to the Wharfedale Racing Pigeon Club.

Also a large lorry used to come late evening sometimes and take baskets of pigeons overnight to Scotland so they could fly back the next day.

Over the years we have heard the sounds of the various animals and birds on the allotments... the crowing of the cockerels, the ducks, the horses, and the pigeons. We have seen the pigeons exercising, flying round and round overhead. Some of those sounds will still be heard if the Silverdale Allotments could be retained in the future for public use and the area designated as a Local Green Space.

Mrs. Lynne Moxon Guiseley

### 3) RECOLLECTIONS OF COACH ROAD ALLOTMENTS

The coach road allotments have been a haven of peace and a hubbub of quiet activity over many years. My own recollections are many and varied; I remember driving the small tractor up the lane to collect hen food from the allotment half way up. This used to belong to Jim Crosbie, but a very good friend of ours called Brian Jackson took over the use of it after Jim's son died. Along with Brian and my brother David we would load the back trailer with corn and I would drive it back down the lane to put it in the food bins. I would often pay Brian a visit to pass a message on from my Dad or just to check he was okay, I'd watch him working away with his pigeons or chickens and chat to him. Also at one point the allotment belonging to Mr. Thackery was rented out to a young man who kept chickens. I fell in love with the large brown cockerel he owned and after much persuasion (and failed attempts) to produce chicks from the bird he gave it to me to put with my chickens. Boy I felt proud! Many a time a stray chicken or duck would wander into the orchard and Brian, I and my brothers and sometimes nephews would hunt through the trees and open space to find it. On several occasions when sitting the bird would seem to completely disappear, only to resurface several weeks later with a few chicks or ducklings in tow. We were concerned that a fox or kestrel would come hunting but it has always felt a safe area to both domestic and wild birds and animals those fears never swayed the birds and nine out of ten times they were correct. On several occasions foxes have been sighted in the early morning light and against the backdrop of the dew soaked grass and hedgerows they have made a breath taking sight.

My friends have paid visits to the allotments and have enthused about the joy we must get from it as they have helped to round up the birds and close up for the night. Over the years we have kept many pets there, geese, goats, a pet sheep and even a small breed of pet cow. Not forgetting dogs, chickens and ducks. Now many years after my own special childhood there, my own nephews and nieces come to spend time there with their children and the memories start anew.

Also Brian has helped out several friends by allowing them to come and share his time on the allotment, one person more recently was in clear need of guidance and help, which Brian gave willingly. Without this space he could not have done that, neither could he have entertained his fellow pigeon racers, and close friends.

Our own allotment has been used by the Guiseley District Flying Club and others to basket, and race the birds from, without it at one stage they would have had to give up.

Although I and my family intend to continue on our piece of land, to garden and raise livestock etc., I do feel many families deserve the right to places like this special piece of green space to create their own memories and wellbeing in a fast driven world. I fear few are left and if the development is allowed to go ahead at this site it will be even less allotment and green space for the community to enjoy.

Jackie Field Yeadon

4) I have been involved with Coach Road Allotments since 1970 when I used to help with feeding and getting the animals in at night. My interest in gardening started then, when I was encouraged to start a vegetable plot from scratch on a piece of unused grass land, which first had to be properly drained by digging land drains. My interest then soon blossomed and I have enjoyed well over 45 years of working the vegetable plots and maintaining the land, overcoming many problems and obstacles over the years.

My memories are of a very intense close community spirit amongst all the allotment owners who would do anything to help one-another, be it nursing sick animals, giving building bricks and glass sheets for repairs or even sharing food and warmth round the only gas fire available at the time. Everybody made sure that their neighbours were alright and were generous in giving their time and help if needed. This produced a very genuine, warm and busy environment, a real hubbub of activity where lifelong friendships were formed although some rivalry was present during the pigeon racing season.

The allotments or Pens as they were affectionately referred to have always attracted local residents and friends from further afield, many come to just chat and enquire about the many animals, school children stopping to watch the antics of the ducks which freely roam all over, but always know when to come back to their beds for the night. The Pens can also be a quiet solitude, a place where private contemplation is possible, away from the stresses of everyday life and if feeling energetic digging and weeding of the garden can release tension for some.

The destruction of this sanctuary for wild life would be a major tragedy for the community affecting many people's lives. Not only the people who currently use the land as it has been assigned to be used but also the many well-wishers who accept that the activities on the allotments both natural and human have become a part of their lives and surroundings. The logical resolution to the absent owners land would be to either tidy up the land in order that it becomes a wild life haven for all to enjoy, including local school children, or to re-generate the land back to allotments where there are many willing gardeners ready to utilise the land as it should be used.

R.Davis Yeadon

5) Having lived in this area for over 35 years we have many memories of the allotments.



We believe that most of the land was owned by a Mr Wright. He was a tall elderly chap with white crinkly hair who always had a walking stick. In the colder weather he wore a dark overcoat and a dark fur Cossack style hat. He was always very pleasant and seemed to be popular and well-known figure in the area.

People kept pigeons on the allotments and pigeon transporters were always coming and going.

There were animals on the allotments too; hens and ducks spring to mind and even a couple of ponies at one time. A source of good fresh eggs too.

The allotments also provided a source of elderflowers and berries for the local wine makers. Blackberries were abundant in the autumn.

It appeared to be a hub of the community.

It was very sad to see the blank spaces left by the recent felling of the many trees on the allotments, especially the poplars which were a dominant feature of the area. This destruction can only be described as an act of wanton vandalism.

J and G Meegan. Guiseley

#### 6) Memories Past and Present.

I was a tiny child in the 1950s and remember clearly my dad lowering me on to the ground from his shoulders, and so began many happy years of play and interaction with animals, large and small birds and wild life that have enriched my life as I grew up and still continues to do so now. The walk to the land was interesting also with rugged tracks leading over an old railway line continuing over a railway bridge, alongside fields with stunning views across Esholt Woods further on these views continued with fields full of cows and sheep. At last we came to our turning, where allotments/smallholdings lined both sides of a private lane small and larger animals were housed in many different huts and brick buildings as were hens ducks, doves and pigeons. With horse's goats and pigs the land was a hive of activity most people also grew veg and fruit. Our love and enjoyment is still as strong as it ever was we still keep livestock of varying nature, many birds, butterflies, insects, hedgehogs, voles and the occasional fox still visit.

A local Children's Home visited the land as did a group of cubs on a separate occasion with much enjoyment shared by all present at the time, at a later date another group of children from a local school showed the same enjoyment that this very natural space can bring.

Home grown fruit and veg is still enjoyed by many members of our extended family, our own children, nieces and nephews are as passionate as we are along with grandchildren, great nephews and nieces who bring extra joy and laughter to the land.

M Davis. Yeadon.

## 7) My time on coach road allotments so far

I remember being on the allotments as a child with my mother and grandfather we used to visit rarely but I enjoyed my time down there when we could I enjoyed looking at the various animals such as the chickens and the horses of which were down on the land when I was young. There were and is still a lot of wildlife on the allotment ranging from the simple wood pigeon to the fox and their cubs who have visited. As I grew older certain circumstances enabled myself and my younger brother to move closer to the allotments so we could spend more time down there and help keep the place running more and more as we got older. As a child I went on a school trip to help plant trees near Esholt Woods and brought back a trimming piece of a silver birch of which we later planted in the paddock on our allotment which is still flourishing and has grown into a mature tree.

As I grew I helped out more and more from cleaning out the chickens and pigeons to planting seeds and carrying the corn to and from one place to another. Me and my brother used to ride our bikes up and down the lane and used to go on bike rides out and about then come back to the allotment down the lane which gives us access to our allotment. We have helped out Mr Brian Jackson who until recently had been renting the allotment next-door we would help him with planting and moving things about.

When I was younger there were horses on one of the allotments that had stables a bit further up the lane which we used to visit and see the horses and play up and down the lane as we did we would see various animals such as frogs and mice occasionally I would sometimes see a fox or two run across and hear them call as it was starting to get dark we would look over at the allotments and see a wide range of wild plants growing and various rustic looking plants as it got later into the year. We would see many people come and go from the pigeon club men who would race pigeons to the land owners coming to check on things some had things planted on their allotments such as flowers like chrysanthemums and sunflowers and vegetables such as leeks corn apple trees and pear trees and we would sometimes trade veg and fruit to do various things with such as jam and soups and preserves.

Jo Dunstan Yeadon

8. I can see my first memory of the Pen very vividly in my mind. I was a young child of 4/5 and had come with my Mum, for our weekly visit to my granddad, Jack. After playing up and down the lane with my brothers and sister, it was time to feed the animals! Each week my granddad would take me for a handful of corn, then up the side of the chicken coop and we would count to three then throw it up in the air, over the fence and watch as the chickens crowded round, hungry for lunch! It is, to this day my fondest memory of a great man! We'd spend many a weekend, playing away the hours with hide and seek, picking vegetables, foraging blackberries and forgetting the week's worries. I remember, as my Mum grew ill with cancer, the pen was one of the only places we could all go together and play together

without our Mum worrying every two minutes where we were and it was the only place she could relax!. My siblings and I spent a lot of nights/days with different family members and foster homes, whilst my Mum was in hospital, too weak to watch us herself. Round the pen, was the only place my sister could act like the child she was! As, at 13 she was the one who looked after us when no else could.

When I had my first born, she was only three weeks old before I took her down there for the first time. I just could not wait to show her the beautiful place I had spent most of my childhood and all my secret hiding places, favourite views and where the BEST blackberries grew. It is such a special piece of land, full of memories, laughter, culture and spirit. After my Mum passed away, I was 13 and there was little that could comfort myself or my family. One of the biggest steps of grief was the spreading of her ashes and the placing of her funeral flowers. We took them to the pen where they belonged. We all went together, as a family and as we spread them it was the hardest, yet easiest thing I had to do. We took her home, to the place she had grown up, the place I had grown up and the place I hope my children will continue to grow into adults.

I love to spend time there as I feel close to family members who have passed. On my wedding day, 11<sup>th</sup> October 2014, my husband and I detoured from our church all the way in Bramley LS13, just to go to the pen (in a WHITE dress) to feel close with passed family and take some very personal photos for ourselves.

This summer we spent many a day down there with my two children and next year we will have another addition! I am excited to grow even more fruits and vegetables, grow even more flowers and encourage as much wildlife as possible onto this land.

A wise man once said, if there is no home for nature, there will be no nature.

K. Rhodes