

Aireborough Neighbourhood Forum

Transport and Movement Overview



Poynton and Poynton High Street, Stockport



Report prepared by Martin Stockley on behalf of Design Council CABE

Aireborough Neighbourhood Forum

The following notes are based on a site visit (on 1st March 2013) on behalf of Design Council CABE with Tom Lonsdale (as CABE Enabler) and Jennifer Kirkby (of the Aireborough Neighbourhood Forum) to give a transport and movement overview on the Aireborough Neighbourhood. It is understood that the Forum is in the process of achieving designation to produce a Neighbourhood Plan.

- There is an inherent underlying problem for the area which stems from nature of the main through-route (the A65) which connects the area to Leeds. This route is used strategically for people driving to and from Leeds, and from Leeds up into the Yorkshire Dales and beyond. It is also the main street of Guiseley and Rawdon running through Yeadon, all of which make up Aireborough (Rawdon has its own Parish council and is not part of the ANF).
- The A65 carries significant levels of vehicle traffic, particularly at peak flow times and at the weekends and has in the past been assessed by transport consultants as overloaded.
- It is understood that Leeds city council is considering a significant expansion of housing development along the A65 route and beyond the Leeds boundary. Bradford is also targeting the A65 area from Menston to Addingham for a significant increase in new housing.

Assessment Overview

- There is a dilemma at the heart of areas like this. They rely to some extent on their connection to major centres like Leeds but over time that very connection becomes damaging to the local economy and the local cultural/social network. This is particularly evident when there is a loss of spacial quality in the smaller centre resulting in the larger centre draining activity towards the more attractive larger centre.
- Over a long period the through traffic route has been the focus of attention and investment with the result that the local area movement is dysfunctional. Local walking and cycling routes are blocked or cut-off and local movement is subservient to through movement.
- The engineering design of the existing road network is directed primarily at facilitating and controlling through movement. The design is also focused on the peak periods of the day. The result of these two factors is that the 24 hour life of the area is designed to deal with the four-five hour total period when the road is at peak flow and for the remaining 19 or so hours of the day it has to cope with a very controlled and engineered condition.
- The development of the retail park in Guiseley has resulted in a road gyratory which has a disproportionate impact on the place quality and on the complexity of vehicle movement controls. Similarly the approach taken to vehicle access/egress to the major Morrisons store results in a concentration of vehicle movement (where dispersal would be preferable) and a missed opportunity in exploiting

the potential for this to contribute to the town centre.

- At the north-west end of Guiseley by the Station Hotel (junction of Otley Road with Oxford Road and Victoria Road/Hallam Street) the traffic signal arrangement produces a poor quality environment for people walking and cycling.
- At Yeadon around the Nunroyd Park entrance (New Road/Kirk Lane) the traffic signal arrangement produces a poor environment and poor access for people walking and cycling.
- The mini-roundabout at junction of Town Gate and Oxford Street/Queensway in the historic heart of Guiseley, results in a disproportionate amount of space given over to vehicle movement with a subsequent loss of environment and access for people walking and cycling. This is in the conservation area and was a congregation point for local people during local festivals e.g. St Oswalds festival in August. It is understood from the ANF workshops that local people would like to restore this area as a gathering space. It is not directly on the A65.

Commentary

- If The Aireborough Neighbourhood is to be truly sustainable economically and socially there is a need to adjust the balance of priority given to the local place versus the through movement. Whilst the connection to Leeds and to townships to the north-west is clearly important there is little value in connecting places that are unsustainable living environments. The local place must be able to thrive in order to make it worthwhile accepting the disruption of through traffic. The spacial quality and quality of everyday movement must be improved.
- The alternative would be to allow the current trend in the area to continue with the result that it would become a dormitory of Leeds. To be a successful local area and support the central Leeds economy the local place must take precedence over through movement.
- The approach here should therefore be to begin with defining what is needed to enable the local socio-economic and cultural life of the area flourish and then to address the question of how best to cope with the necessary movement of vehicles through the area at peak times.
- The transport planning must support the economy and life of the neighbourhood, not simply move people and goods around and through. It is preferable to have a high quality environment with some transport difficulties than to put transport first and allow the environment to deteriorate as it has to date.
- The suggestion that Leeds City Council is considering further growth in homes on this route is cause for concern unless this housing aim can be justified in terms of environmental improvement and reduced vehicle movement. It may be that Aireborough could accommodate more homes but only if the opportunity for local employment can be increased and this is only likely to be achieved through a change in the way that local movement is dealt with. Local must take priority over strategic in this regard.

- There are three key points where the use of over-controlling traffic signals is causing significant environmental damage and loss of quality of local movement (these are noted above). In all three locations it is likely that removal of the signalised controls along with a redesign of the public realm would produce a significant improvement in both environmental quality and the flow of vehicles. In particular the over-complex gyratory at the retail park is clearly not an appropriate way of dealing with the mixed demands of movement in this area. There are very good examples elsewhere of large numbers of vehicles being managed in a much better way and more efficiently. Poynton in Stockport (see figures 1 and 2 below) is a scheme we completed in 2012 where 27,000 vehicles a day are passing through similar junction arrangements without use of signals, in a high quality and low hazard environment.
- Using controlling traffic signals has a number of negative impacts. There is an inherent inefficiency in signal controls in that it is necessary to build in 'stop' phases where some or all vehicles are on red lights. The fact of the red light stop period generates a negative behavioural response in people seeking to chase the green light. This causes people to be less patient and less likely to allow other vehicles to filter into the moving stream and less likely to allow people on bikes and on foot the time and space they need to move through and across the space. There is also a physical loss of environmental quality seen in the arrays of signal posts, signage, line painting and highway surface treatments which all detract significantly from the spacial quality of the place.

Poynton, Stockport



Fig. 1 Poynton, Stockport; The traffic signal controlled layout and local environment prior to the works of 2012. This junction handles 27,000 vehicle movements per day



Fig. 2 Poynton, Stockport: The main junction with external controls (traffic signals) removed allowing people driving, cycling and walking to negotiate their way safely through the improved environment.

Summary

- Aireborough Neighbourhood is being damaged by the current approach of transport planning by allowing strategic movement to take priority over local movement requirements.
- This approach is unsustainable and if allowed to continue (alongside a growth in housing) will most likely result in the area becoming a dormitory suburb of Leeds with little local character and very little ability to contribute to the wider area economy.
- It would be possible to significantly alter the current condition by taking a sustainable approach to transport, which would mean a local dominated movement strategy which was designed in a way that it could cope with strategic movement during peak periods.
- The over-use of traffic signals has caused significant damage to the local environment and to local access routes. Re-design of four key sections of the neighbourhood involving removal of traffic signals and adoption of current proven principals of shared movement space could generate a major improvement in the local environment and access to local facilities.

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