

**URGENT SUBMISSION FOR SPOT LISTING OF  
THE 'AERIAL GLIDE' STATIC FAIRGROUND RIDE  
SHIPLEY GLEN AMUSEMENT PARK  
(Generally known as the Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds)  
PROD LANE, SHIPLEY GLEN, BAILDON, WEST YORKSHIRE**

**Submission to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport**

Submission by

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## **Appendices**

- A Copy of *The Changing Face of Baildon Moor*, Bradford Metropolitan Council and Countryside Commission, with coloured map approx 1:10,000 showing Baildon Moor and environs to which has been added location of ShIPLEY Glen Amusement Park (ShIPLEY Glen Pleasure Grounds) and the Glen Railway.
- B Copy of OS map scale 1:10,000 showing the location of ShIPLEY Glen Amusement Park (ShIPLEY Glen Pleasure Grounds) edged in red.

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This application is for the urgent spot listing of the static amusement park ride known as the 'Aerial Glide' situated in Shipley Glen Amusement Park (known as Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds) Prod Lane, Shipley Glen, Baildon, West Yorkshire in the Metropolitan District of Bradford at map reference NGR SE13573877. The Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds occupy a small site of approximately 0.3 hectares.
- 1.2 Built between 1900 and 1910, the 'Aerial Glide' is the oldest surviving static amusement park ride in the United Kingdom and is unique in that it is the only surviving example of an amusement park ride of its type.
- 1.3 The 'Aerial Glide' is believed to be under imminent threat of destruction.
- 1.4 The Applicants are Mike Short and Nick Laister.
- 1.5 Mike Short is a local resident and has lived opposite the Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds with his family for almost seventeen years. He took his first ride on the 'Aerial Glide' at the age of four in 1954. Mike Short and his wife, Di Millen, together with neighbours Paul Roberts and Cathy Richardson Roberts of Ventura House, Prod Lane, led the campaign of public opposition and organised the public petition against an outline planning application to demolish the Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds and build houses on the site.
- 1.6 Nick Laister BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI MIPI MIHT is a leading amusement park historian, planning consultant and publisher. He is a Chartered Town Planner and Technical Director with the RPS Group PLC and specialises in planning for tourism and leisure. He is involved in the promotion of major development projects around the UK and Ireland, and has appeared as expert witness at several public inquiries and hearings. He has written articles for a number of newspapers and journals and has been invited to speak at conferences on the subject of planning for tourism and leisure. He is the co-owner of Skelter Publishing LLP and editor of the website [www.joylandbooks.com](http://www.joylandbooks.com), which specialises in books on amusement park history. A report issued by Nick Laister to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and English Heritage in 2001 resulted in the listing of the Scenic Railway roller coaster at Dreamland, Margate, Kent, the UK's oldest roller coaster. This was the first time an amusement park ride had been listed.

## **2 Shipley Glen and surrounding attractions: a brief description and history**

- 2.1 At Appendix 'A' is attached a large tourist leaflet published by City of Bradford Metropolitan Council and the Countryside Commission that includes a large scale coloured map (1:10,000) of Baildon Moor and surrounding area. Shipley Glen to the West and Southwest of the moor is printed coloured in green. For the purposes of this application, the applicants have added the location of the Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds (edged red and shown as Shipley Glen Amusement Park) and the historic Glen Tramway (the United Kingdom's oldest surviving cable railway, excluding cliff lifts). Immediately to the South, 1km from Shipley Glen and 0.4km from Shipley Glen Tramway, just beyond the River Aire, lays the village of Saltaire, a village that was granted UNESCO World Heritage Status in 2001.
- 2.2 Shipley Glen is an area of outstanding beauty comprising the grassy Bracken Hall Green, the spectacular millstone grit Bracken Hall Crag and steeply sloping woodland on both sides of Lode Pit (or Loadstone) Beck. The public open spaces of Baildon Moor, Shipley Glen together with the woodland to the East are a valuable recreational resource with an extensive rights of way network. There are several sites of special scientific interest on Baildon Moor and Shipley Glen including many Neolithic 'cup and ring' carved rocks and bronze age walls and field systems. The historic Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds and the historic Shipley Glen Tramway are an essential part of that recreational resource.
- 2.3 Baildon Moor and Shipley Glen connect to the world heritage site of Saltaire village via Prod Lane (on which the Pleasure Grounds are situated), the Glen Tramway and Roberts Park. All these elements form a major tourist attraction and were a crucial part of Bradford's 2002 European City of Culture bid.
- 2.4 Shipley Glen together with the Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds and the Shipley Glen Tramway have been a hugely important 'playground' for generations of Bradfordians since early Victorian times. The Glen got its first tourist attraction after the closure of 1887 Saltaire exhibition when a wooden switchback railway that had been part of the exhibition, and which was probably only the second switchback railway erected in the United Kingdom, was re-erected on the Glen at Brackenhall Farm. Known as the 'Royal Yorkshire Switchback', it closed in 1917.
- 2.5 Other attractions soon followed, including a giant camera obscura, and by the end of the 1880s thousands of people, particularly from working class families employed in the hundreds of textile mills in Bradford, spent their Saturday and Sunday afternoons on the Glen.
- 2.6 In 1889, the first cable hauled ride was built on Shipley Glen and was known as the 'Aerial Flight' (not to be confused with the 'Aerial Glide'). Only one photograph is known of this ride and it shows a huge wooden tower with a twin-line ropeway hauling

passengers in a gondola high above the Glen (to a matching tower). It was closed and demolished in 1920.

- 2.7 In 1897, the 'Toboggan Slide' was opened. Described at the time as, 'the longest, widest and steepest ever erected on earth', the ride consisted of three tracks down which passengers descended on wooden toboggans and two tracks on which the passengers and toboggans were hauled up by tram. The ride closed after an accident on Whit Sunday 1900.
- 2.8 The thousands of Victorian visitors that journeyed to Shipley Glen to enjoy its marvellous attractions came largely on foot through the village of Saltaire, across the River Aire and up the steep bridleway through Walker Woods to Prod Lane and the Glen beyond. In 1894, local entrepreneur, Sam Wilson saw the opportunity to make money by building a railway alongside the steep bridleway. Built at a cost of £2500, the quarter-mile Glen Tramway opened to the public on 17 May 1895. Hauled on wire cables powered by gas engines, a coupled pair of open topped cars ran on each of twin tracks passing each other mid way.
- 2.9 Although the Glen Tramway has closed twice and subsequently re-opened, it still runs today, 108 years later. In 2003 its future became much more secure when an emergency grant of £20,000 was made by the local authority. Ownership has now been transferred to a local authority supported trust and this should secure the long-term future of what is the oldest surviving tram railway (excluding cliff lifts) in the United Kingdom.

### 3 Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds and the 'Aerial Glide'

- 3.1 A date-stone on Vulcan House, 2 Prod Lane shows that it was built in 1879. Within a short space of time a tearooms was opened within its grounds to capture the thousands of visitors making their way to Shipley Glen. Shortly after the first large attractions began to appear on the Glen, the Vulcan House tearooms began to introduce amusement park rides of their own, but on a much smaller scale than on the Glen. By comparison to most amusement parks, the Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds are very small.
- 3.2 Of the many children's rides in the Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds today, by far the oldest is the 'Aerial Glide'. At precisely what date the 'Aerial Glide' was constructed is not known. The likely date of construction is 1900. It was certainly before 1910 since it appears on cine footage at that date. It has been claimed that it was built in 1870 but that appears unlikely in view of the date of Vulcan House. It is possible that an earlier version built of timber was there before the metal version appeared around 1900.
- 3.3 The 'Aerial Glide' is a large ride, being built on a gentle slope at the Southeastern corner of the Pleasure Grounds. Riders take their seats in the chairlift-style cars in the station, which is at the highest point of the ride. The suspended cars are then released and they career down an extended U-shaped track down to the lowest point of the ride below the station. Riders leave at this point, and the cars are then hoisted back up the lift hill back to the top station.
- 3.4 The 'Aerial Glide' is believed to be unique in that it is the only known ride of its type to survive. The 'Aerial Glide' is the oldest surviving static amusement park ride of any type in the United Kingdom.
- 3.5 Photographs of the 'Aerial Glide'



3.5.1 General view of the top station (Courtesy: [www.ukrides.info](http://www.ukrides.info))



3.5.2 General view of the construction from beneath



3.5.3 The top station



3.5.4 Away from the top station



3.5.5 Around the last corner – attendant waiting at bottom station



3.5.6 Back to the top – the passenger walks, the car is hauled back by motor.

3.6 In addition to the Aerial Glide, there were many other rides added and there were other attractions. At one time there was even a bear and a lion in cages not much bigger than the animals. The heyday of the Pleasure Grounds was the 1930s and 1950s and it is clear that some of the existing rides are from that period. A vintage swing-boat set still remains. Some original penny slot machines also survive alongside their modern counterparts.

3.7 The current landowner is Mr Paul Teale who resides in Vulcan House. His father bought the house and Pleasure Grounds in 1966 and was the operator. Mr Paul Teale succeeded his father. In 1986, Mr Teale leased the Pleasure Grounds to

independent operators. New rides and a bouncy castle were introduced to complement the 'Aerial Glide', the swingboats and the 1930-50s rides. Mr Teale receives an annual rent for the lease of the Pleasure Grounds. The operators, who are responsible for rates and insurance and the upkeep of the rides make a profit from the operation despite the fact that visitor numbers are a fraction of 1950 levels.

3.8 The Pleasure Grounds are aimed primarily at young children and there is a good range of attractions for them. Candyfloss, hot-dogs and drinks are available and there are a few slot machines and vintage slot machines aimed at the visiting parents.

3.9 The Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds are open at weekends from around Easter to mid-October, bank & public holidays and during the week during school holidays. They also open for a short period before Christmas.

3.10 General views of some of the other rides at the Pleasure Grounds



3.10.1



3.10.2

#### **4 The interdependence of the Shipley Glen amenities and facilities**

- 4.1 Although many of the attractions that brought the crowds to Shipley Glen and Prod Lane have long since closed, the area remains an important local tourist spot and well visited beauty spot as well as a playground for families with young children, especially those who cannot afford to venture far from home. The facilities and attractions that still exist are: the Glen Railway that now has a small museum at the bottom of the line as well as the gift and bookshop at the top; the Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds; a small shop that also owns an art deco style 1930s dodgem ride with original cars (the dodgem ride has not been open to the public for a long time and appears to be undergoing a slow restoration); a public house; a tearooms. In addition, the local authority own and operate the Bracken Hall Countryside Centre that provides an educational resource and seeks to provide information and education to visitors, and schools throughout the district, about the wildlife, scenery and history of the area.
- 4.2 All the attractions and facilities on the Glen and surrounding area are, to a large extent, interdependent. This is especially so in the case of the historic Glen Tramway and the Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds. It is estimated (and generally accepted by all) that around one half of the visitors to the pleasure grounds take a ride on the Tramway and that a significant number of those using the Tramway visit the Pleasure Grounds. If the Tramway were to close, the amusement park would no longer be viable and, conversely, if the Pleasure Grounds were to close then the Tramway could no longer cover its costs even though it uses voluntary labour. The important, and historic, link between Saltaire world heritage site and the open spaces of Shipley Glen, Baildon Moor and beyond would thus be lost.

## **5 The threat to the Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds and the 'Aerial Glide'**

- 5.1 In 2002, Mr Paul Teale of 2 Vulcan House, Prod Lane, Shipley Glen, Baildon, Shipley, West Yorkshire BD17 5BN, the landowner of the Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds, applied for outline planning permission to demolish the Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds and remove all of its rides and to redevelop the site for housing. A campaign of opposition was formed and a public petition organised. On 9 September 2002, the public petition was presented to the local authority officers servicing Shipley Area Planning Panel of Bradford Metropolitan District Council together with written formal objections.
- 5.2 The planning application came before Shipley Area Planning Panel on 15 May 2003. Further objections to the application and the applicant's supporting arguments were presented by the objectors and a written summary of those arguments were tabled.
- 5.3 The arguments of the objectors to the planning application are in appended documents and will not be repeated here except to highlight that a principal objection was that the applicant had not fulfilled important requirements of Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17). After a site visit on 15 May 2003 by members of the Shipley Area Planning Panel, the planning application was deferred.
- 5.4 In October 2003, the objectors learned that the Planning Panel had sought legal advice and that advice agreed with the position of the objectors that the requirements of PPG17, particularly in regard to local consultation, had not been fulfilled. Recognising that a public consultation exercise would be a great expense to the landowner, the local authority had further deferred the planning application until after Christmas 2003 to allow the applicant to consider his position. Of very great concern to the objectors was that local authority officers were of the view that it could not prevent the landowner closing the Pleasure Grounds, removing all the rides including the historic 'Aerial Glide' and reapplying for planning permission to build houses when the site became derelict.
- 5.5 It is now understood from local residents that the landowner may allow the Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds to operate for a further year but that he may be planning to demolish the 'Aerial Glide' around, or shortly after Christmas 2003. If this is true, it suggests that by demolishing the 'Aerial Glide', the landowner would remove a major obstacle to his development plans. Even if it is not true, it highlights the real dangers that are ever present to this unique piece of Britain's amusement park history - the oldest static amusement park ride in the United Kingdom – a danger that, the applicants for spot listing believe should be safeguarded by spot listing the structure.

## 6 The case for spot listing

6.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides protection for buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest. Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15): Planning and the Historic Environment (September 1994) provides the Government's current policy for the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas, and other elements of the historic environment.

6.2 The 'Aerial Glide' is undoubtedly an unusual candidate for listing. However, PPG15 recognises that listing needs to look beyond architectural set-pieces and identify structures of historic and cultural importance. It states (paragraph 6.2):

*"There is a growing appreciation not just of the architectural set pieces, but of many more structures, especially industrial, agricultural and other vernacular buildings..."*

6.3 Paragraph 6.10 sets out the principles for selecting structures for listing:

- Architectural merit
- Historic interest
- Close historical associations
- Group value

6.4 We consider that the 'Aerial Glide' should be listed because of its historic interest. Paragraph 6.10 of PPG15 provides more detail on these criteria. It states that 'historic interest' includes buildings that illustrate important aspects of the nation's social, economic, cultural or military history. In the history of British amusement parks, the 'Aerial Glide' is perhaps the most important survivor not just because it is the United Kingdom's oldest surviving static amusement park ride but it is also unique as the only known surviving ride of its type, and is therefore a significant social and cultural icon that should be protected.

6.5 PPG15 emphasises that age and rarity needs to be taken into account in identifying structures for listing:

*"Age and rarity are relevant considerations, particularly where buildings are proposed on the strength of their historic interest. The older a building is, and the fewer the surviving examples of its kind, the more likely it is to have historic importance."*

Given the points raised above on age and rarity, and under the criteria set out in PPG15, the 'Aerial Glide' can be considered to have substantial historic importance.

6.6 Paragraph 6.12 explains the approach for the listing of twentieth century structures. The approach is to identify "key exemplars" for each of a range of building types. In terms of amusement park structures, the 'Aerial Glide' must be considered to be a

key exemplar given its status as the oldest surviving static amusement park ride in the United Kingdom and the only known surviving example of a ride of its type. Moreover, we consider the ride to have much more than local importance because of those factors and consider that the building should be listed partly due to its national importance in fairground and amusement park history and, therefore, in social and cultural history.

6.7 PPG15 states:

*“...the listing of buildings primarily for historical reasons is to a greater extent a comparative exercise and needs to be selective where a substantial number of buildings of a similar type and quality survive.”*

In the case of the ‘Aerial Glide’, there are no other survivors and, therefore, in terms of its historic interest, its value has to be regarded as extremely high.

6.8 While we consider that the ‘Aerial Glide’ is a delightful example of a children’s amusement park ride, we do not suggest that it should be listed for its aesthetic qualities. We ask that it be listed for its historical importance, its age, its rarity and because its future is not secure. PPG15 makes it clear that structures of historic interest do not have to display aesthetic merits:

*“Buildings which are important for reasons of technological innovation, or as illustrating particular examples of social or economic history may well have little external visual quality.”*

This is undoubtedly the case for the ‘Aerial Glide’. Its importance is in what it represents, rather than its aesthetic merit.

6.9 In considering the case for the spot listing of the ‘Aerial Glide’, an amusement park ride, it is important to note that this would not be the first ride to have been listed and, therefore, there is already precedent for such action. In 2002, the Secretary of State agreed to list the magnificent wooden Scenic Railway Roller Coaster at Dreamland, Margate, Kent that was built in 1920 following the submission of a report by one of the authors of this document. The ‘Aerial Glide’ is diminutive by comparison to the Dreamland Scenic Railway Roller Coaster and the Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds are diminutive compared to Dreamland. That does not mean that the ‘Aerial Glide’ is less worthy of spot listing. Indeed, the age and status of the ‘Aerial Glide’ as the oldest surviving amusement park ride in the United Kingdom suggests to the applicants that it is at least as worthy of listing as was the Dreamland Scenic Railway Roller Coaster.

6.10 The strong likelihood is that if the landowners and operators of the ‘Aerial Glide’ are not served with a buildings preservation notice and/or the ride is not subsequently listed, the ‘Aerial Glide’ will be demolished, possibly as soon as after Christmas 2003. There are a number of reasons for believing that this will happen.

- 6.10.1 There was strong public opposition to the proposed demolition to the Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds and the application for housing development. Without doubt, the landowner is aware that the existence of the historically important 'Aerial Glide' is an obstacle to his development plans.
- 6.10.2 Even though the plot occupied by the Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds is small, the site is in an area of high value housing and the land with planning permission is worth many times more than it is at present.
- 6.10.3 Even if the Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds were to remain in its present form, without listed status there may still be a pressure on the owner and operators to replace it with several modern, and more lucrative, rides. It is our opinion that the Shipley Glen Pleasure Grounds would be less of an attraction without this classic ride in any event. It is our contention that the listing of this ride can act as a catalyst for the a more active publicity and marketing exercise by not only the owners and operators, but by the local authority who manage the surrounding open spaces and promote tourism to both the Saltaire and Baildon Moor/Shipley Glen areas.
- 6.11 There may be an option to secure the long-term future of the Shipley Glen Pleasure Gardens and that of the 'Aerial Glide' open to the landowner and that would involve talks between him, the local authority and the newly formed Glen Railway Trust with a view to that trust purchasing the Pleasure Grounds at a cost that reflected the value of the land as an amusement park. Further discussion on that option is not a proper subject for this submission. It is worth mentioning simply to remark that the landowner would be unlikely to sell if he believes that the 'Aerial Glide' can be demolished.
- 6.12.1 On the basis of the case set out above, we request that the 'Aerial Glide' is given Grade II status, but would also ask that consideration is given to Grade II\* since it is, in our view, a national treasure, given that it is the oldest surviving static amusement park ride in the United Kingdom and the only known surviving ride of its type.

## 7 Bibliography

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