

## **NEW EARSWICK**

### **Conservation Area No. 20 (38.6 ha)**

#### **Introduction**

New Earswick was designated as a conservation area in 1991 and includes practically all of the original village.

#### **History**

In 1901 Joseph Rowntree bought 150 acres of agricultural land, the first step in the philanthropist's dream come true. Some houses were completed in 1904 "In an effort to provide houses which shall be artistic in appearance, sanitary and thoroughly well built and yet within the means of working men earning about 25 shillings a week" (Evening Press, December 1904). His son, Seebohm Rowntree saw through much of the implementation of his father's vision. The houses were designed by Parker and Unwin, at 12 per acre, each complete with social and educational facilities; The Folk Hall (1905), school (1912), surgery and followed by facilities for the increasing number of elderly or infirm residents.

In 1970 the houses were found to be structurally sound, but refurbishment and modernisation was carried out. Today the village is managed by The Joseph Rowntree Memorial Housing Trust, and has a Council of its own elected Members from the community.

#### **Important Buildings**

The originality, authenticity and sheer visual appeal of Parker and Unwin's designs is reflected in the concentration of listed buildings in New Earswick, quite unusual in any village, however old or new. Included are most of the buildings, notably the Folk Hall and Primary School, complete streets of housing and many other groups of housing.

#### **Character**

Harmony of layout, design, material, detailing and landscaping created a concept that caught the spirit of the age, founding a completely new village settlement that had come to epitomise the "garden village" at its best. It was also a bold concept; at the time only very modest expansion for housing had taken place in the countryside around York.

The layout re-established the virtues of streetscape in its tree-lined and often traffic free avenues complemented by pleasant cul-de-sacs leading off to either side. The street pattern flows around the public amenity spaces and community buildings at the heart of the village. Natural features are utilised, like the stream at the southern end of the village, with generous tree planting and the unifying elements of hedgerows as front garden boundaries, and grass verges. With gardens front and rear, the village has matured and the houses are set in leafy surrounds.

The architectural style of the buildings is based on an Arts and Craft's rationale. They are endowed with a character of their own and are essentially simple, yet are sympathetic to the rural setting; in spirit with the vernacular of the area, yet not a copy; rather an interpretation with an imaginative, consistent form and detailing to create a deeply satisfying sense of unity and identity. These qualities are reinforced by the materials used; bricks originally from a nearby brickyard (now a Nature Reserve) and French tile roofing.

The qualities of the modelling and domestic scale of building harmonises the development, whether terraces, semi-detached units or the larger public buildings; yet also allows an appropriate sense of order and variety to be established between them. Roofscape is interesting throughout, complemented by gables and a carefully

controlled range of dormers: from a flat-roofed or gable style to the paired dormers raising from roofs that flow down to the first floor level on some of the houses. The simple range of casement windows used are entirely in sympathy with the mood and character of the development.

The main elements of the character and appearance of the area are:-

- (1) The social vision translated into reality with humanity and harmony to create a distinct sense of place and community: truly a "village of vision"
- (2) The qualities of the layout, creating attractive streetscapes and pleasant private gardens and public spaces.
- (3) The imaginative, yet simple, authentic building designs of Parker and Unwin, establishing a whole village with consistence and style, yet which is natural, varied and uncontrived
- (4) The consistent use of materials and landscaping contributing to the "garden village" character.