

Leeds North West – Constituency Profile

Leeds North West is a seat with a strong prospect in the next general election. In the 2024 local election, the Liberal Democrats came 3rd across the constituency. We came 4th in the last general election, having delivered only one constituency-wide leaflet, but retained our deposit and used our resources to ensure the election of an MP in our nearest target seat.

The local party is keen to find a candidate they can support to build up activity across the constituency and use our existing stronghold as a base to fight a winning campaign.

If you have any questions regarding the constituency or would like to discuss further, please email the chair at gsykes537@gmail.com.

Overview of the Constituency Boundaries

Leeds North West comprises the Leeds City Council wards of Adel and Wharfedale, Guiseley and Rawdon, Horsforth, and Otley and Yeadon. These areas were formed from parts of the old Leeds North West constituency and the former Pudsey constituency. The previous Leeds North West constituency had a Liberal Democrat MP until 2017. The new boundaries exclude the Headingley and Weetwood wards (student-dominated areas) and instead include Horsforth, Guiseley and Rawdon. The result is a constituency that stretches from the historic market town of Otley in the north down to Horsforth in the south, with Guiseley and Yeadon in between.

Background on Leeds Local Elections

Whilst considering Leeds' prospects over the next few years, it's important to highlight a few key facts about our elections. Most importantly, Leeds' local council wards are large, containing between 15,000 and 17,000 people. Each ward has three councillors, with one councillor in each ward going up for election each year and a development year without elections every four years (2025 is a development year).

Due to this, it takes a tremendous amount of effort for us to break new ground; however, once elected, councillors are paid an annual allowance of £18,350. This makes standing in Leeds a great option for anyone with the drive to win a parliamentary seat, but would struggle to find the time commit alongside a full time job.

Furthermore, it provides us with ample opportunity to build up our momentum over the next three local elections. Once we have two of the four wards, we can convincingly claim the election is between us and another party.

Local Geography, Demographics, and Character

Leeds North West is a diverse mix of suburban towns, villages, and green belt areas on the outskirts of Leeds. An ONS data factsheet is attached to this profile.

Adel and Wharfedale: This area covers the suburban region of Adel and its nearby villages, including Bramhope, Pool-in-Wharfedale, and Arthington, situated along the Wharfedale valley. It's relatively affluent with a large number of skilled professionals.

Guiseley and Rawdon: includes the town of Guiseley (a commuter hub with a strong sense of community and small-business presence) and the village of Rawdon. Both feature a mix of suburban development and rural outskirts. Rawdon has a parish council, which is due to hold elections in 2027.

Horsforth is a prosperous town suburb with a high proportion of families and commuters; it boasts a traditional high street and Leeds Trinity University, giving it a small student presence alongside its long-established residential community. Horsforth has a town council, which is due to hold elections in 2027.

Otley and Yeadon ward comprises the historic market town of Otley, renowned for its markets, pubs, and strong community spirit, and Yeadon, which hosts Leeds Bradford Airport and retains a village-like character despite its proximity to the city. Otley has a town council, which is due to hold elections in 2027.

Demographically, the constituency is predominantly middle-class, characterised by high levels of homeownership and employment in professional or skilled trades. The population skews slightly older in some villages and suburbs, although families are prevalent across Horsforth and Guiseley. Overall, the seat's character is semi-rural and suburban, with residents who often feel distinct from inner-city Leeds and value local issues, community identity, and quality-of-life concerns.

Despite its generally affluent profile, the area has a tradition of independent-minded politics. Voters here are known to support candidates who champion local interests – whether that's protecting the countryside from overdevelopment, improving transport links (rail and road congestion are perennial issues), or opposing unpopular projects (for example, airport expansion or housing on greenbelt land). This independent streak has historically benefited the Liberal Democrats, who are viewed as a strong local voice in these communities. In the Brexit referendum the previous Leeds North West constituency voted to remain by a margin of 64% to 35%.

Former elections in Leeds North West

Leeds North West was represented in Parliament by former Lib Dem MP Greg Mulholland from 2005 to 2017. Mulholland's 12-year tenure is proof that a Liberal Democrat can not only win here but hold the seat across multiple election cycles (including the challenging 2010–2015 coalition years).

Horsforth ward had Liberal Democrat councillors until 2016, and for many years before that, Horsforth was a three-way marginal on the City Council (we held seats there consistently in the 2000s and early 2010s).

In Otley and Yeadon, the Liberal Democrat strength is even more pronounced and enduring – the ward has been a longstanding stronghold of the Liberal Democrats. We have held all three council seats in Otley & Yeadon since its formation in 2004.

Guiseley and Rawdon is a new addition to the constituency, and we have already had success in running a petition there on the introduction of parking charges at the local train station, which gained over a thousand signatures. This demonstrates the potential for the Liberal Democrats in this ward if we can provide a compelling alternative to Labour and the Conservatives.

We have not historically been able to impact the Conservative stronghold of Adel & Wharfedale, which has a long history of Conservative representation. In 2023, we ran a campaign that included canvassing and delivering three leaflets during the run-up to the election, and we came third with 19.1% of the vote.

It's worth noting that even at the low ebb of 2015, we still secured nearly 37% of the vote and a 6.7% victory margin, demonstrating the depth of Lib Dem support that exists here.

In summary, the Liberal Democrats have campaigned in every single ward in the constituency and have built a reputation for community campaigning and visible local leadership. We currently hold a quarter of the local council seats, placing us in second place behind Labour and third in terms of the popular vote across the constituency at the last local election.

With a concerted effort to win another one of the council wards and establish a presence in a third, we could be in a clear position to win by mid-way through the parliament.

Local Party Organisation and Resources

Our local party in Leeds North West is active and provides a strong foundation for an incoming candidate. We currently have 128 Liberal Democrat members living within the constituency and a total of 442 members across the Leeds area, which operates as one Local party. Come a general election, we expect to pool our entire membership into a target constituency locally; however, a good candidate should be willing to help out across the city to build our capacity.

This is a healthy base of volunteers, canvassers, and supporters to tap into. Many of our members here are veterans of multiple election campaigns – they have local knowledge and experience that a candidate can count on. Crucially, the Leeds Liberal Democrats are well-organised: we have an established executive committee, regular branch meetings in Otley, and an array of seasoned campaigners (including former councillors and community activists).

In the 2024 general election, the entire Leeds membership was directed to Harrogate and Knaresborough. During the final two weeks of the campaign, 1/3 of all canvass attempts made in Harrogate and Knaresborough were by Leeds members. This demonstrates the scale of the campaigning machine that we can operate and how willing our members are to get stuck in with an election.

We don't currently have an office or any paid staff at a local level. The most recent advice from ALDC was that we had sufficient local campaigning experience to focus our finances on campaigning until we need an office.

The Leeds local party contains two branches, one covering Otley and Yeadon and another covering Rothwell (our other held ward in Leeds). These branches can have their own bank account and contribute a portion of their donations to the city-wide party.

The Leeds wide party has an annual income of £30,000, and the two branches have an income of £3,000 each. Running a whole election campaign in a new ward typically costs us £5,000.

Path to Victory – Why Leeds North West is Winnable

Leeds North West presents a genuine winnable opportunity for the Liberal Democrats, provided the right candidate is selected and a focused effort is made. Here's why this seat should excite any prospective Lib Dem candidate:

- **Favourable New Boundaries:** The boundary changes, while mixing things up, have not hurt our prospects – in fact, they've in some ways improved them. By shedding Labour-heavy student areas and incorporating more suburban voters, the seat's profile is more competitive for us. Our stronghold (Otley & Yeadon) remains entirely inside the seat, providing a reliable chunk of votes. The more Conservative-leaning wards imported from Pudsey (Horsforth, Guiseley and Rawdon) are areas where disillusioned centre-right voters can find a home with us.
- **Momentum from Recent Results:** Our performance in 2024 – holding our own in the general election and maintaining a councillor base – shows that the tide is starting to turn in our favour locally. Labour's win here is recent and by no means deeply entrenched; the new Labour MP is a first-termer with little incumbency advantage yet.
- **Active Local Campaigning Opportunities:** Crucially, there will be three local election cycles between now and the next expected general election (likely in 2028 or 2029). This means three years of regular opportunities to campaign, win council seats, and raise the Liberal Democrat profile in every part of the constituency. By fielding strong local candidates and targeting winnable ward seats, we can build a narrative of comeback and momentum. Each spring's local elections will serve as a testing ground and publicity boost for the parliamentary effort. A committed parliamentary candidate could start working with our councillors immediately – attending community forums, getting in the local press, and showing up where it matters (from Otley's Victorian Fayre to the Horsforth Gala, the Guiseley lights switch-on, etc.). These grassroots activities, sustained over multiple years, will make our candidate a household name and the Lib Dems a familiar, trusted choice at the ballot box.
- **Strong Volunteer Base and Membership:** As noted, our active membership (128 in the seat) provides an ideal pool from which to recruit volunteers. Our city-wide

membership of 442 also enables us to recruit campaigners from across Leeds for large-scale action days. There's a genuine enthusiasm among local members to win back Leeds North West – morale is high, and the team is eager for a charismatic candidate to rally behind. You won't be alone; you'll have an experienced campaign team and plenty of volunteers for leaflet delivery, phone banking, canvassing and data entry. This is a constituency where the Lib Dem campaign machine is already in motion – it just needs a candidate to lead it from the front.

- **Resonant Issues to Champion:** A savvy candidate will find no shortage of resonant local issues to tap into, which align well with Liberal Democrat values. Labour focuses a significant amount of the city's money on the centre and urban areas of the city, and is particularly poor at listening to the towns and villages around the edges. The success of third parties in towns around the outskirts of Leeds, including the Lib Dems in Otley & Yeadon, and Rothwell, independents in Morley and Garforth, and the Greens in Wetherby, shows that the other commuter towns in Leeds North West are likely to be great opportunities for us.
- **Historic Success & Voter Memory:** We've done it before, and we can do it again. The Liberal Democrats held the constituency (in its previous form) for over a decade. Many voters here fondly remember having a Liberal Democrat MP who was visible locally and stood up for the community. That goodwill is a springboard – a new candidate can proudly tie themselves to that legacy of effective local representation.

Conclusion: A Winning Prospect for the Right Candidate

Leeds North West is ripe for a Liberal Democrat resurgence. The constituency combines a history of Liberal Democrat success, an energised local party, and a volatile political landscape that creates an opportunity for our party to retake the initiative. With a passionate, professional, and community-focused candidate leading the charge, we can persuasively make the case that Leeds North West deserves an MP who will put local people first, as our party always strives to do.

This profile is more than just background information – it's an invitation. If you have ever wanted to make a difference on a big stage and return a Liberal voice to Parliament from Yorkshire, Leeds North West is the place to do it. The groundwork has been laid: a constituency that aligns with our values, thousands of voters already on our side, and an infrastructure ready to support you. What we need next is *you* – a candidate with vision, dedication, and the ability to inspire. With your leadership and with the tireless efforts of our local team, Leeds North West can be won. It may not flip overnight, but with each passing month of campaigning and each council seat gained, we will be moving closer to victory. By the time of the next general election, we intend to be the challenger that everyone is talking about – and ultimately, the surprise winner on election night.

In summary, Leeds North West is a winnable seat with the right candidate. We hope this profile has provided you with a clear understanding of the constituency and why we are confident in its potential. The opportunity is here to make history and become the next

Liberal Democrat MP for Leeds North West – and to give this vibrant community the representation it deserves. If you're up for the challenge, the Leeds North West Liberal Democrats will be with you every step of the way. Let's turn this seat gold again!