

Newsletter February 2023

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



A warm welcome to our latest newsletter. You will find this rather different from our normal editions. Over recent weeks BW has received some criticism on social media from a few individuals who don't share our views, particularly in our opposition to the application by Lidl to demolish the Mercure hotel and replace it with a food store and several homes for elderly people.

That's fair enough. We all have an opinion, and we respect those who take a different view, preferably with any criticism being made in a constructive way.

A question asked by some on social media is ***"Just who are Better Wetherby?"***

Accordingly, the purpose of this newsletter is to answer that particular question and tell you a little more about what we do as an organisation.

However, let me firstly address the criticism made about BW's objection to the Lidl application. Although the application was recently withdrawn, we anticipate they may try again in the future. Our views about Lidl have been well documented in previous [newsletters](#) and on our website but, in summary, they are as follows:

- The Leeds Site Allocation Plan (SAP) makes it clear that should the hotel go, then the site should be used for older persons housing/independent living. Additionally, it specifies that any future development should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.
- In 2012 LCC Planning authorities refused an application by Sainsbury's to replace the Mercure Hotel with a supermarket on the grounds that it would have a significant adverse impact on the vitality and viability of Wetherby town centre, and it would be harmful to the character and appearance of the adjacent Conservation Area. In objecting to the recent Lidl application, BW contended that the grounds for refusal in 2012 remained, and we also pointed out the clarity about future development given by the Leeds SAP.
- BW is not anti-Lidl! However, BW contend that this is just the wrong location for a new supermarket / food-store, whether this be a Lidl, Tesco, Sainsbury's or other company.

My colleagues and I are grateful to the people who support our efforts, with nearly 700 people now on the mailing list for our periodic newsletters. We welcome and encourage local people to get involved and support our efforts.

More information can be found on the BW website www.betterwetherby.com. If you would like to know more, I can be contacted by phone on 07973 805055 or by email at roger.owen.3@btopenworld.com.

Thanks for reading.

Roger Owen

Chair: **Better Wetherby Partnership**

"Working to ensure that the physical character of Wetherby and District is protected and developed for the benefit of the community of both current and future generations"

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ABOUT BETTER WETHERBY (BW) – WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

“Just who are Better Wetherby?”

We are local volunteers from a variety of organisations. Basically, BW is a partnership of people who live in and around Wetherby, a cross section of society and our local community. We are like-minded individuals who enjoy living in the town but are concerned about the negative impact that some large building applications would have on the town. We want to see its future development being done in a sensitive, careful way, so that it benefits the town and maintains it as a great place to live, work and visit.

What brought us together?

In 2018, [several local organisations](#) and residents in the Wetherby area came together to form BW. The consortium was initially formed to give public voice to numerous individual objections resulting from an application in 2018 by the owners of Stockeld Park to build a large housing development on the north-western boundary with Wetherby. Action by BW over a long campaign and 4-day [Public Inquiry in Harrogate](#) led to the Stockeld Park/Hallam application being rejected.

At the time we realised that we needed to raise funds, particularly to cover the expense of hiring an expert consultant at the public inquiry. A bank account was required, and in order to do so we needed to have some form of legal standing. It was decided to form Better Wetherby Partnership Ltd, a registered company with no share capital. Creation of this company also ensured that audited accounts needed to be submitted thus providing transparency regarding our funding and expenses, and also the details of our volunteer directors.

The aim of BW:

To ensure that the physical character of Wetherby and District is protected and developed for the benefit of current and future generations.

The Focus of the BW Steering Group:

On major planning issues affecting the town. However, BW has also been involved in wider environmental matters, such as [bridleways and footpaths](#).

Key objectives

- To ensure that future development respects the community led sense of place we enjoy.
- To help preserve the natural environment and rural setting of Wetherby and surrounding villages.
- To be a catalyst to help the town evolve in a positive way.

Our work – main areas

- Housing / Planning applications.
- Highways and transport infrastructure.
- Helping to [protect the local environment](#).
- Influencing housing policy.
- Promoting responsible, sustainable development.



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What do we do?

We try to ensure, as with our continuing efforts on the huge [TW Racecourse Approach](#) project, that we get the best possible outcome for the town. In respect of that project where up to 800 new homes are to be built, we engaged, at an early stage, with the developers, Taylor Wimpey, and Leeds City planning officials

Regular meetings have taken place over a lengthy period, continuing through lockdown via Zoom, to consider all aspects of design, construction, layout, climate change and other issues. The meetings have taken place in a constructive and positive spirit with considerable progress being made. The developers have listened. They have taken account of and accepted many of the proposals made by BW. The outcome will be a much better development than the one initially envisaged; indeed, it should be an exemplar development. This represents a win/win for the developers, planners, the people who will live in the new homes, and the local community.

We are NOT NIMBY's.

We are not opposed to house building - far from it. However, having seen the way some towns, villages, and communities, up and down the country, have had some rather questionable and unremarkable developments imposed on them, we want to try to avoid this happening in our attractive market town.

We live in a town of character and long history. Indeed, in 2024 the town will be commemorating the bicentenary of the Great Sale of Wetherby which took place in October 1824. BW seeks to ensure that future development is done in a way that not just retains the distinct character of the town, but also includes the building of new homes that are well designed, sustainable and energy efficient, so they complement, not detract from the town.

We always try to achieve our aims by positive dialogue and action; in addition to our work with the Racecourse Approach development, we always attempt to respond to local/national government consultation documents and importantly encourage our supporters to do so. A recent example of this is our formal response to the [West Yorkshire transport consultation](#) for which we have received some negative comments. We believe that such formal responses will definitely be considered by the appropriate authorities and that they are much more likely to have an effect than to simply criticising said authorities on social media (most of which is probably not visible to those being criticised).

Why not get involved?

Those of us on the BW Steering Group are all volunteers. We welcome new members, so please think about getting involved. More information about the work and activities of the organisation can be found on our website www.betterwetherby.com.



Stronger together in helping care for our community, protecting the environment and making Wetherby even better for future generations

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