

Newsletter January 2025

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

A warm welcome to the first BW newsletter of 2025. Wishing you all a belated, but very Happy New Year. Late December left us with a parting shot of bad weather and floods on Wetherby Ings. The first days of January brought heavy snow, followed by yet more flooding, then a blast of gale force winds. However, at least we can be grateful that the situation in Wetherby was nowhere near as bad as in some other parts of the country. After all, it is winter!



It was unfortunate that the stormy weather in December prevented the outdoor part of the Dickensian Market from taking place. A casualty of this was our Better Wetherby display. I was particularly disappointed as it's always a pleasure to meet people at this excellent annual event. A word of thanks to Wetherby Lions who do a superb job in organising the event and for their efforts throughout the year on behalf of the community.

Next month will see my fifth anniversary as Chair of BW, something which has given me great personal pride when watching and working with colleagues on a number of issues. I am especially proud of the favourable reputation BW has achieved both in the town and with outside organisations. I am not one for 'spoilers' but the next phase in the life of BW is looming and myself and the other Directors are actively involved in preparing this for roll-out in late Spring - watch this space!.

Within the newsletter you will find an update on most of what we are involved with and also issues going forward. I especially draw your attention to the section under North Yorkshire 'Call for Sites.'

Thanks for reading and all the very best for 2025.

Roger Owen

Chair: **Better Wetherby Partnership**

LIDL

Since we reported in the last newsletter that Lidl had been successful in their appeal against the refusal of their application by Leeds Plans Panel (Ref [23/01507/FU](#)) to demolish the Mercure Hotel and build a Lidl store and adjoining retirement accommodation, there has been no information forthcoming about the situation from either Lidl or Leeds City Council. A report of the outcome featured in the [Yorkshire Evening Post on 18th December](#) and included comments from BW Chair, Roger Owen, and Ward Councillors Alan Lamb and Penny Stables.

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BW will report further as and when information is available. It is anticipated that any Planning Application will be heavily conditioned. BW remains convinced that this is the wrong site and will be looking very closely at what comes forward.

Further documents relating to the Public Inquiry can be found [here](#).

MALTKILN DEVELOPMENT

Last September a Government Inspector held an Inquiry in Harrogate to examine the Maltkiln Development Plan Document (DPD). BW is a little surprised but heartened by the fact that there is, at this time, no report from the Inspector. This has the effect of holding up, for now at least, any further progress with the development itself. Readers will recall the position of BW has always been against this development which was further complicated by the Deputy Prime Minister (in July) saying that all new development should now include 50% Affordable Housing which is badly lacking nationally. BW sought to clarify this in a meeting with the MP for Wetherby and Easingwold, Sir Alec Shelbrooke. He recently confirmed that the government has rowed back from the 50% figure. However, as the Inspector is yet to report on the DPD Inquiry BW remains on careful watch. Please also read the section below on Call for Sites.

RACECOURSE APPROACH

Work started onsite by Taylor Wimpey (TW) several weeks ago and Persimmon have been clearing the various conditions relating to their planning application for what will now be around 128 dwellings, down substantially from the 300 originally allocated for their site. At the invitation of Ward Councillor Alan Lamb, BW attended a briefing meeting by the two developers at the Civic Hall earlier this month. Various matters were discussed, but the main points are that TW expect an overall 7-year build programme to complete their allocation of just under 800 new homes and Persimmon 3 years. Access road construction is to be carried out by LCC once tenders are received and approved. BW will be considering a separate, more detailed communication about this in the next few weeks.

PLANS TO INTRODUCE PARKING CHARGES IN WETHERBY – SITUATION ONGOING - WATCH THIS SPACE!

It is now over a year since Leeds City Council announced proposals to introduce parking charges in the Wilderness and Old Station car parks. The plans were met with considerable local opposition over fears that charges would have a detrimental impact on the town, particularly on the local shops and businesses.

Wetherby Ward Councillor, Alan Lamb, who is leading efforts to oppose the charges, recently reported that despite the LCC Executive Board voting by 9-1 in favour of introducing the charges (Councillor Lamb was the solitary vote against), there now has to be a statutory consultation. This should start in the near future and will take between 6 to 12 months to complete. BW will provide an update once details of the consultation are announced and how you can contribute to try to stop these damaging charges.

HIGHWAYS ISSUES – NEW 20mph SPEED LIMITS INTRODUCED

The speed limit in Linton Road was recently reduced to 20mph bringing it into line with the speed limit in the town centre and some other parts of Wetherby. The 20mph limit is a public safety measure designed to help promote road safety, to reduce accidents and injury. Motorists should be

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aware of the new limits and adjust accordingly. Enforcement action is being taken against those speeding.

In relation to wider highway issues in the town, a monthly meeting chaired by Ward Councillor, Alan Lamb, takes place in the Wetherby Methodist Church at 5.30pm on the first Tuesday of the month. The focus of the meetings is on identifying specific problems and prioritising action. In addition to the three Wetherby Ward Councillors, the Town Council is represented along with a Leeds City Council Highways official. BW is also represented at the meetings. Members of the public are welcome to attend.

LECTURE ON BIODIVERSITY – 27TH MARCH

Professor Alastair Fitter, Vice chair of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT) is coming to talk to Wetherby U3A Environment Group on the issue of Biodiversity at 2pm on Thursday, 27 March at St. James Church Hall, Wetherby. He is a renowned expert in Ecology and was instrumental in saving Askham Bog near York, the only surviving Ice Age peatland, from being developed for housing. For his work on the project he was awarded the Christopher Cadbury Medal, for dedication to the advancement of nature Conservation within the British Isles. The £3 cost of entry covers a donation to YWT.

NORTH YORKSHIRE ‘CALL FOR SITES’

North Yorkshire Council (NYC) recently announced their Local Plan ‘Call for Sites’ document which, in simple terms, encourages the identification by any developer, corporate or individual to register interest in developing. This process then ultimately transmits, after some weeding, to the next Local / Structure Plan or Site Allocation Plan process which will be subject to scrutiny in the form of an Inquiry. This is the same process which in Leeds gave rise to the allocation of Racecourse Approach for up to 1,100 houses.

The [documents seen by BW](#) would seem to indicate strong interest in further major developments which will clearly impact on our Town. This is of major concern, especially with the existing Maltkiln proposals to build around 3,000 new homes near Cattal, only a short drive from Wetherby.

There is a long way to go but Wetherby residents have been caught ‘sleeping at the wheel’ previously in respect of Racecourse and Maltkiln. The [‘Call for Sites’](#) appears to show heavy interest and focus on Kirk Deighton and land between Wetherby and Spofforth – again. Considering that in recent decades Wetherby has grown substantially with high levels of new house building taking place, the view of BW is that the town cannot take much more.

Of particular concern is that Wetherby is already struggling to cope with increasingly high levels of traffic. The construction of large numbers of new homes in and around Wetherby will inevitably result in further increases in traffic, leading to further congestion and a rise in air and noise pollution.

Matters have been further complicated in the last few days with a report linking new Town developments at Poppleton and Weeton. BW will be monitoring the situation and will report further when information is available.

JOIN US

If you wish to be included on our mailing list please send a request via our website or by email to betterwetherby@gmail.com. Please feel free to share this newsletter - the more people that are aware of these important local issues, the better.

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