

PRESS RELEASE 28th February 2020

NEW CHAIR FOR BETTER WETHERBY

Hot on the heels of its pivotal role in the recent Stockeld Park/ Hallam Land Planning Appeal refusal, Better Wetherby has elected Roger Owen to be its new Chair. Mr. Owen, a former long serving Board Director of Morrisons, has taken over from Peter Swales.

The new Chair said:

“I look forward to help continue the excellent work of Better Wetherby. The Partnership came together very quickly as a result of the threats seen to the quality of life in Wetherby from the Stockeld Park Planning Application and the Leeds Site Allocation Plan that allocated land for up to 1100 new homes at Racecourse Approach. I want to make it clear that Better Wetherby is not against development per se, but development has to be in the right place and appropriate to our lovely market town. Stockeld was not right or appropriate at all. The site was not in the Harrogate Local Plan and it was opportunistic in its nature. Hopefully the recent Appeal Decision and the new Local Plan has now put a stop to any more of that”

In terms of the site at Racecourse Approach, Outline Planning Consent was granted for the building of 800 new homes, but subject to certain conditions. Leeds Plans Panel recently refused an Application by Taylor Wimpey to alter part of that Approval, but Better Wetherby is maintaining efforts to hold the developer to the conditions already imposed.

Speaking about the Racecourse Approach development, Mr. Owen said:

“The view of Better Wetherby is that this is the wrong site, but we are where we are, and we will be striving to ensure the best outcome for the Town. We are not a group of NIMBYs, but we are concerned that Wetherby is under stress. This comes from the significant uplift in traffic at peak times, causing harmful emissions in and around the Town centre, pressure on patient lists and appointment waiting times at our health providers and on school places. All this results from blinkered consideration of single issues rather than the bigger picture. We need joined-up thinking not box ticking to satisfy Central Government requirements on elements such as house building. The new Wetherby Neighbourhood Plan goes some way towards this and I was pleased to see the positive response of local people to the Plan”

Outlining his immediate priorities, Mr. Owen said:

“Over the next few weeks, now that we are free from the demands of Planning Inquiries, Better Wetherby will be examining all the elements that make up this town and looking to pass on our findings to the surrounding Local Authorities as well as Leeds City Council and our friends and neighbours, the Wetherby residents themselves”

Mr Owen paid tribute to former Chair Peter Swales and to Paul Crossan who was Lead Advocate on the Stockeld Public Inquiry:

“Peter took the Chair when Better Wetherby was effectively an idea only, but due to a change of job he is currently unable to devote the amount time he would like. Paul did an amazing job at the recent Public Inquiry and played a major part in achieving a successful outcome. We have received many messages of support and compliments since the decision was announced. It is gratifying that local people appreciate the work of Better Wetherby and I encourage more people to get involved in our efforts to help preserve our lovely town and community”

For further information, please contact: Roger Owen, Better Wetherby

Telephone:

Email: BetterWetherby@gmail.com

*The **Better Wetherby Partnership** is a consortium of local people from a variety of organisations who contribute to initiatives designed to help make Wetherby and the surrounding villages better for the community of both present and future generations.*