

## **NEWSLETTER – RACECOURSE APPROACH UPDATE**

### **August 2020**

#### **MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR**



Welcome to this latest newsletter. The focus is on the latest developments in the long running saga of the Racecourse Approach application by the developers, Taylor Wimpey.

Unfortunately we have some disappointing news. Despite strong opposition from Better Wetherby (BW), Leeds City Council Plans Panel has accepted a recommendation by Leeds Planning Officers to allow the application to progress to the detailed design stage. However, regardless of this setback, BW will be continuing our efforts on a number of fronts, including engaging with the Developer and City Council around the detail of the Plans Panel decision. The aim of BW now is to seek to influence events to mitigate the

damage from such a huge development and ensure that the best possible outcome for our town is achieved. Please see details below.

#### **Roger Owen**

Chair - Better Wetherby Partnership

#### **RACECOURSE APPROACH – PLANS PANEL MEETING ON 6<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2020**

This application by Taylor Wimpey (TW) to build a development of 800 houses on the outskirts of Wetherby has been in the planning system for around 3 years. It has received consistent and strong opposition from BW and many local people and subject to scrutiny in several hearings by Leeds City Council Plans Panel (meeting of Councillors). At a previous Plans Panel meeting, the application was approved subject to a number of conditions being met, including a key issue of ensuring that an access point was secured onto York Road on the south-western corner of the site.

In recent months representatives of TW have engaged in negotiations to purchase land to secure the necessary access point. As they have been unable to reach an agreement with the landowner, TW requested that this specific condition be removed and gave Notice of Appeal should their request not be granted. Leeds Planning Officers reported that they supported the removal of the condition, maintaining that other access points from Racecourse Approach would be acceptable.

At a lengthy meeting of the Plans Panel on 6<sup>th</sup> August, BW spokesperson, Ward Councillor Alan Lamb, pointed out that to allow the removal of the condition would be in direct conflict with the approved Leeds Site Allocation Plan (SAP). This would call into question the relevance of the SAP and undermine the whole ethos of the National Planning process. Councillor Lamb said that BW accepted that a development would take place on this site, as it was allocated in the Leeds SAP. However, as it would bring huge change to Wetherby, the biggest change for over 50 years, it was important to get things right. He maintained that the application in its current form was not right for Wetherby and asked that the application be rejected. Peter Catton, speaking on behalf of Wetherby Civic Society, also opposed the application. He contended that it failed to meet the requirements of the Leeds SAP, the National Planning Framework and the Wetherby Neighbourhood Plan.

*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.*

Mark Johnson, representing TW, also addressed the Panel. He maintained that the removal of the condition was compliant with the SAP and that TW would be pressing ahead irrespective of the Panel's decision. He confirmed that a notice of appeal was in the system. Mr. Johnson said that TW was hopeful that the design stage would be the time for consultation and engagement with those who were critical of the development.

Several members of the Panel expressed serious concerns about the application. However, in spite of those reservations there was a majority vote of 8 – 5 in favour of removing the condition about the access point and allowing the application to progress to the next phase in the planning process, that of the detailed design stage.

Whilst the outcome is a disappointment, it is the view of BW that it also presents an opportunity. It is accepted that a development on this site will take place, probably over a period of several years. Therefore the aim of BW is now to ensure that this becomes an exemplar housing development. BW is fully prepared to reach out and engage in a positive way with TW and Leeds Planning Officers to offer our views and advice during the detailed design phase. Local people can be assured that BW will be continuing our efforts, using the means at our disposal, to ensure that we achieve the best possible outcome for our town.

### **BETTER WETHERBY WEBSITE**

To keep updated about the work and activities of BW, please visit [www.betterwetherby.com](http://www.betterwetherby.com).

### **CONTACT US**

We welcome further volunteers and supporters to assist our efforts. Please contact us with any comments and queries. If you wish to be included on our mailing list please send a request by email to [betterwetherby@gmail.com](mailto:betterwetherby@gmail.com).

*Please feel free to share this newsletter - the more people that are aware of these important issues, the better.*