

Newsletter April 2023

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Welcome to our latest Newsletter and I hope you had a Happy Easter with friends, family or away for a few days as Spring is sprung, even if a little chilly. This edition may be a little more fully loaded than usual as there is much to tell you or update upon, we have been quite busy. The most important event for me took place in the last two weeks with our "Conversations with Better Wetherby" evening held at The Bridge Hotel in nice surroundings and well catered by hotel staff, thanks to them. We were limited to numbers so apologies to anyone who would have liked to come, I think there were also one or two communication glitches but that didn't stop an almost 'full house' attending with presentations by my colleagues, Norma Harrington and Pete Swales, plus myself which raised a number of questions from the floor, more later. We hope to make this a regular event.

Regular readers will know of my repeated comments around joining us to assist our efforts. The Bridge Hotel has helped this message and I will be contacting several attendees over the next week or so when we have discussed at our next meeting but don't let that stop you contacting me by phone on 07973805055 or by email at roger.owen.3@btopenworld.com

Thanks for reading I hope you find our work interesting.

Roger Owen

Chair: **Better Wetherby Partnership**

LIDL NEW PLANNING APPLICATION - UPDATE

Readers will know that a previous Planning Application for a Store and Residential Development on the site of the Mercure Hotel was withdrawn some months ago. Lidl said then they would be back and have now submitted a revised Planning Application with some tweaks from the original (Application 23/01507/FU can be found on the [Leeds Council Plans Portal](#) where there is opportunity to comment). As with the [previous Application](#) BW has lodged an objection, [our letter is on our website](#). Contrary to some views in the Town BW is not against a Lidl Store but is opposed to this site which is not allocated for Retail development in the Leeds [Site Allocation Plan](#) (SAP) or the [Neighbourhood Plan](#) for Wetherby, both of which are adopted Plans with some life left to run before the next review. In our view this is simply the wrong site and the apparent attitude of Lidl of 'this is it take it or see you at Appeal', is regrettable for a Company of their size. They have been advised there are other sites in Town and the next move is up to them.

See our [website for more details](#), including how you can make your views known to LCC, but note that the closing date for comments is 2nd May.

"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"

Better Wetherby Partnership Ltd (Company Number 11855009), 41 Spofforth Hill, Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS22 6SF

email: betterwetherby@gmail.com

web: www.betterwetherby.com

Facebook: [#BetterWetherbyPartnership](https://www.facebook.com/BetterWetherbyPartnership)

RACECOURSE APPROACH UPDATE – AWARD WINNER?

As readers know the first tranche of this development by Taylor Wimpey was granted Reserved Matters [Planning consent](#) many weeks ago and BW were pleased to have contributed to the end result which is some way improved on the original thinking. Our contribution was highlighted at the recent ‘Conversations’ event at the Bridge Hotel. As an update we understand that there are still some technical issues with the most recent Approval that remain unresolved, and BW will be watching this closely.

In the meantime, BW has been advised that Taylor Wimpey have been nominated for a National Award by the Royal Town Planning Institute, recognising the involvement of local organisations in the development process. In the case of Racecourse this included Ward and Town Councillors and the Civic Society, all partners of BW who have been singled out for praise. BW Chair, Roger Owen said *“I was taken aback when I heard this news, but it reinforced and is just reward for the many hours put in by colleagues within BW over many months of Zoom meetings which later became face to face”*. The Chair went on *“We are volunteers but the willingness of colleagues to make themselves aware of specific topics such as site layout, house types and materials, biodiversity, traffic and transport, highways and energy conservation and then put forward reasoned argument to get where we are has made me so proud of them as individuals and a team”*.

The fate of the Award will be known as we go to issue and the spin-off is a place at the table for BW when the time comes to assess the Persimmon Planning Application for the rest of the site which will give BW the opportunity to strengthen some detailed arguments specific to the Persimmon location.

MALTKILN DEVELOPMENT – CHANGE AFOOT?

The biggest news with this development proposal for up to 4000 houses around Cattal came out of the blue with the announced withdrawal of one of the landowners and a reported reduction in the scheme to 2000 houses. The outcome and next steps are unclear as the Wetherby based developer Caddick has stated its’ intention to continue. The new North Yorkshire Authority has paused all Plan reviews within the new Authority for up to 5 years but has stated Maltkiln will be excluded from that pause process. [As previously reported BW](#) has objected to the original scheme based on the strain it would impose on all aspects of day-to-day life in Wetherby. Traffic, air quality, strain on Medical and School places, lack of public transport, etc. BW has also noted calls from some Councillors in the new Authority to re-examine housing needs throughout the area and BW supports that. BW Chair, Roger Owen, asked Harrogate Council for proof that there had been co-operation with LCC Planners regarding all the problem issues. There was no response, and a subsequent Freedom of Information request has been ignored. Roger said *“This was a personal request outside of BW business but I did mention it at our ‘Conversations’ event at which two members of the new Authority were present so I hope they got the message”*.

BW AND CONSULTATIONS

Since the start of the current year BW has submitted responses to various Consultations. These main responses were to West Yorkshire Combined Authority on its Transport Vision where BW noted that the [‘Major Settlement’ of Wetherby is excluded](#) from the area map. BW is aware that Mayor Brabin has seen the response but so far, no feedback. The BW response to the Gove Levelling Up and revision to [National Planning Policy Framework was submitted](#) more recently and last of all BW has made initial submissions to the LCC Local Plan consultation. Details of all these are or will be available for viewing on our website and we encourage participation where it is still possible.

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CONVERSATIONS WITH BETTER WETHERBY

This event was held at the Bridge Hotel, Walshford on the evening of 12th April and attracted a generous gathering of Partner organisations and members. The idea was to reconnect after the Covid interruption, and the evening featured illustrated presentations by BW Vice Chair Cllr. Norma Harrington and Director Pete Swales in addition to Chair Roger Owen. Roger has commented, *“The evening went well. We asked for feedback which is being analysed and will be discussed at our next meeting. I thank all those who attended, we had many questions and there was a lot of talk during the mid event break, and after which was very encouraging. We shall be hosting further events although we are conscious that holiday season is around the corner”*. Roger added *“What was very pleasing was the fact that our Partner organisations throughout the area turned out in strength which allowed us to reconnect, something overdue which I take responsibility for”*. Feedback when analysed will be shared in either Newsletter or email form.

JOIN US

The ‘Conversations’ event helped BW underline the need for more and wider help. The Chair repeated the acceptance that people lead busy lives these days, but many have specific talents which may be required from time to time for one off projects or events. The message from the Chair was simple *“ In my time in Wetherby, over nine years, I have noted the massive lack of interest in what happens in the Town unless it is at the bottom of individuals gardens”*. That approach leads to a ‘get what you deserve’ answer to most things. Roger highlights the approach from a leading figure in the Town who wrote recently protesting about the Racecourse development. The response being *“where have you been for the last four years?”* Get involved or just contact us if you feel you would like to be part of the team even if you ‘can’t play every match’.

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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