

Newsletter July 2023

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Welcome to our latest Newsletter. Here we are just past Mid-Summer and apparently about to hit another hot spell. Personally, I'm feeling a little hard done by having returned from a holiday in Spain with a mixture of cool temperatures and their first rain for months, whilst at home heat! In the last few days, this area of Spain has been subject to water cut off for the hours of darkness, so I shouldn't complain.

Changes are afoot at BW, caused by the rules under which the Directors operate. We are also hopeful of swelling numbers following our April "**Conversations with Better Wetherby**" event. We will be organising a similar event in the autumn and will email all members about these topics at the end of the month.

In the meantime, other matters continue to tick along as you will read below and, as always, I invite your always welcome comments.

Finally, for those interested, I will be continuing my periodic 'appearances' [on Tempo FM](#) (107.4 FM or livestream) on 25th July with more BW updates and news.

Enjoy the coming fine weather.

Roger Owen

Chair: **Better Wetherby Partnership**

LEEDS PLANNING PORTAL – CONTROVERSIAL CHANGES

The Planning Portal maintained by Leeds City Council has, over many years, provided detailed information and public access to the planning process, allowing people to read information about individual planning applications, including letters of support, objection and other comments from members of the public and organisations.

However, Leeds City Council recently announced the start of a six-month trial which effectively restricts the information available for the public to view on the Portal. Although it still provides a means for individuals and organisations to submit and record their comments about a specific application, these will no longer be included on the Portal. One of the downsides of this is to make it impossible to gauge the strength of support/opposition, and the actual views of people about a particular application.

From the viewpoint of BW, this is a regrettable and retrograde step in terms of visibility and transparency and serves to discourage public involvement in the planning process. A letter outlining the concerns of BW and requesting that the trial be discontinued was sent to the Chief Planning Officer, David Feeney. He responded promptly explaining the rationale behind the decision.

Mr. Feeney was keen to emphasise that the change does not result in a cessation of the planning portal system (Public Access) of public participation. This remains unchanged in terms of the ability of members of the public, groups and organisations to make comments on planning applications.

"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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Comments relating to material matters continue to be welcomed by Planning Officers and will be taken into account as part of their wider considerations of the planning process. However, these letters/comments/emails, will not be on public view. Mr. Feeney also made the point that in recent years Public Access has been increasingly used as a platform for antagonistic correspondence between applicants and objectors and that the LCC Planning Department was regularly contacted by residents with concerns, but who are reluctant to submit their comments in writing, given that they would be published online.

Whilst appreciating the helpful response from the Chief Planning Officer, BW remain concerned about the situation. We will monitor progress and look forward to an effective evaluation at the end of the trial.

Comments about the ongoing trial can be sent to Mr. David Feeney, LCC Chief Planning Officer, 10th Floor West, Merrion House, 110 Merrion Centre, Leeds LS2 8BB.

LIDL PLANNING APPLICATION

It has been several months since a revised Planning Application ([23/01507/FU](#)) was submitted by Lidl to demolish the Mercure Hotel and use the land to build a Store, together with a Residential Development. As highlighted in a [previous newsletter](#), BW has lodged an objection, the principal reason being that the site is not allocated for Retail development in the Leeds Site Allocation Plan (SAP) or in the Neighbourhood Plan for Wetherby. Both are adopted Plans and were developed after substantial consultation. ***It is the view of BW that this is simply the wrong site.*** You can see our letter of objection on the [BW website](#). There is no information yet as to when the application is likely to be brought before the Planning Committee, but we will keep people informed of the situation. In the meantime, people can still register their comments about the application on the [Leeds Planning Portal](#).

RACECOURSE APPROACH

BW was delighted to be linked with the news that Taylor Wimpey had been nominated by the Royal Town Planning Institute for a National Award. The Award was to recognise Public Participation in the Planning process and related to the first phase of the Racecourse development.

BW Chair Roger Owen commented “This came out of the blue but is a massive reflection on BW and especially my colleagues who sat through hours of Zoom meetings during the pandemic debating any number of specific topics around the developing scheme with the sole aim of achieving an exemplar result for what is a huge addition to the size of our Town which will impose many stresses on everyday life”.

At the time of writing BW is not aware of the outcome but will continue to be involved in the next phase of development when Persimmon Homes make their Planning Application for some 300 dwellings. In the meantime, Taylor Wimpey have indicated they intend to start the first phase of construction early next year.

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MALKILN DEVELOPMENT

The proposal to build up to [4000 homes](#) around Cattal Station has recently been reduced by some 50% after the refusal of one landowner to sell to the developer, Wetherby based Caddick. This appears to have left the scheme in limbo, together with the disappearance of Harrogate Borough Council into the new NYCC. Some members of the new Authority are questioning the need for this development which has previously brought objections from National Highways (A59 capacity and safety), the Environment Agency (flooding) and many individuals. BW also objected on grounds of adverse impact on traffic, parking, air quality, Health care and School places.

BW will continue to monitor, and details can still be found on the Harrogate Borough Planning Portal (ref: [19/00017/EIAMAJ](#)).

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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