



PRESS RELEASE 19th October 2023

LIDL STORE PLANNING APPLICATION IN WETHERBY REFUSED

A meeting of Leeds City Council's North and East Plans Panel today unanimously rejected a Planning Application for the demolition of the Mercure Hotel and development of a Lidl store with adjoining retirement accommodation. (***Application 23/01507/FU on the Leeds Council Plans Portal***).

The Application which followed the withdrawal of a similar scheme by Lidl some months ago had been opposed by Wetherby Ward Councillors Norma Harrington and Alan Lamb, Wetherby Town Council, Wetherby Civic Society and Better Wetherby Partnership, on the grounds the Application was contrary to the adopted Leeds Site Allocation Plan and Local Plan, together with the adopted Wetherby Neighbourhood Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Representatives of Wetherby Town Council, Civic Society, Better Wetherby, local residents, together with Ward Councillors Harrington and Lamb attended the meeting.

Speaking after the meeting, Better Wetherby Chair (BW), Roger Owen said, ***“Better Wetherby are not opposed to having a Lidl Store in Wetherby. But just not on this site. We made that clear in our submissions to Leeds and on our website. (<https://www.betterwetherby.com/new-lidl-submission-2023.html>). If this Application had been approved it would have driven a coach and horses through the adopted plans for the Town and also opened national floodgates for retail on previously approved housing sites, a situation which would have left the Government of any political colour having to release more, sometimes Green belt land, for much needed housing. This scenario is clearly not on”***.

Mr. Owen added ***“Officers of LCC produced one of the most comprehensive reports on a Planning Application I have seen. This concluded with a strong recommendation to REFUSE the Application detailing a lengthy list of reasons why they reached that position. The decision was certainly the correct one. Although Lidl mounted a strong marketing campaign to encourage support, the fact is that this Application was flawed from the outset. I hope that Lidl will now focus on finding a more appropriate site. I also encourage the Mercure Hotel Group to make efforts to upgrade the existing hotel to provide Wetherby with the higher standard of accommodation the Town needs and deserves to attract visitors and business.***

“We will now have to wait to see what reaction the decision brings from Lidl, but many people in Wetherby will remember that in 2012, Leeds Planning Authorities refused an Application by Sainsbury for the same site. The grounds for refusal made over a decade ago included that it would have a significant adverse impact on the vitality and viability of Wetherby town centre - basically that it would have serious and negative consequences for local town centre shops – and

“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)

furthermore it would be harmful to the character and appearance of the adjacent Conservation Area. The reasons given for refusal then remain equally valid today.

After the Plans Panel decision, Wetherby Town Councillor, Neil O’Byrne said ***‘The Panel took a considered and, in my view, the correct decision. The Town Council is not opposed to another food store in Wetherby, far from it. However, this is just the wrong site. I hope that Lidl will now work with others to locate an appropriate site’.***

One of a number of local people attending the Hearing from Micklegate View and Grange View and who objected to the Application said ***‘This Application has been the source of a great deal of anxiety to my neighbours and myself over many months. I just hope that Lidl will now accept the decision and find another site for their supermarket’.***

For further information, please contact: Roger Owen, Better Wetherby – Telephone 07973 805055 or by email at roger.owen.3@btopenworld.com.



Photograph of Roger Owen