

Newsletter November 2022

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



A warm welcome to our latest newsletter. Well, after the extreme, record breaking summer temperatures and drought conditions, we have had a pleasant autumn so far. Given the steep rise in energy prices, with the forecast of more increases to come, let's hope for a mild winter.

When Lidl announced their intention to submit a planning application to demolish the Mercure Hotel on Wetherby Road and replace it with a supermarket, BW and many local people strongly opposed the idea and made their views known to the company. Lidl management clearly did not get the message that this is simply the wrong location for another supermarket. They have ignored public concerns and recently submitted a formal planning application. BW will be submitting an objection and encourage others to do the same. Further details about this unwelcome application are shown in the newsletter.

Another contentious, large-scale development, that has major implications for Wetherby is subject of a current planning consultation. Known as the Maltkiln, this relates to the building of up to 4,000 new homes in Cattal, North Yorkshire, just a few miles from Wetherby. Although this is a decision for Harrogate Borough Council, if it goes ahead in the proposed form then it will result in profound and adverse consequences for Wetherby, particularly in respect of highways issues, congestion and impact on already overburdened services. Please see below as to how you can comment on this.

On a happier note, I was pleased to be one of three speakers at the event '**Wetherby – Past, Present and Future**' during the recent Wetherby Arts Festival. It was very well attended and an enjoyable afternoon. My congratulations to the Festival organisers for another successful season.

I'm hoping that those in the Festival audience listening to my talk will now have a clearer picture of the work of BW and that some may volunteer to help as we go forward. I'm heartened by the fact that many local people really care about the future of our town, so a gentle reminder to please consider assisting our efforts. The contact details are shown in this newsletter and can also be found on [our website](#). If you would care to contact me by phone on 07973 805055 or by email at roger.owen.3@btopenworld.com I will be pleased to provide more information.

Thanks for reading.

Roger Owen
Chair: **Better Wetherby Partnership**

RACECOURSE APPROACH DEVELOPMENT – SWINNOW PARK – UPDATE

Having met with Taylor Wimpey (TW) back in May, BW were invited to take part, with other interested parties, in a further discussion with Leeds City Planners at the start of August. We were able to demonstrate ongoing concerns around some of the 50 plus Conditions attached to the TW Outline Planning Consent. At the meeting we were introduced to two new LCC Planning Officers and were pleased to hear that our previous concerns were not only noted but added to by Officers. Additionally, since our meeting, BW has become aware that previous 'satisfaction' consultee responses from the Water Agencies had [changed to objections](#) which needed resolution. BW awaits confirmation that changes in levels on site have resolved the issues.

BW and other partners had a further meeting with TW on 2nd November. There have been some significant changes to the scheme, notably there will now be no gas supply to the site and all properties will utilise air source heat pumps. There is also a drop in house numbers from the initial 800 to 762, a reduction in the number of house types from 5 to 4 and inclusion of bungalows on the site. In addition, there are welcome changes with an increase in green space, walking and cycling routes, widening of green corridors, less frontage parking and some changes to character areas.

Although there are still some outstanding matters to be finalised, it is pleasing that TW has listened and responded in a positive way to representations from BW, the Civic Society and Ward Councillors, in meetings over a period of many months. The next stage in the process is for a further meeting with the LCC Plans Panel over the coming weeks to consider the revised scheme. BW will be maintaining our efforts to get the best possible outcome and an exemplar development that will complement our attractive town. We will report further after the Plans Panel meeting.

Information, documents and plans regarding the development can be viewed on the Leeds City Council Planning portal ([see our website](#) for a full list of links)

BETTER WETHERBY AT THE WETHERBY ARTS FESTIVAL

The recent [Wetherby Arts Festival](#) included an event '**Wetherby – Past, Present and Future**' looking at how Wetherby has developed over the years and how it may look in the future

A large audience in a packed room at St. James Church Centre firstly heard a fascinating talk about aspects of the history of Wetherby from Victor Hawkins of the Civic Society. Local Councillor, Connor Mulhall, then gave an insight into the changing demographics of the town and how Wetherby Town Council was responding to present day problems, particularly the climate emergency and environmental issues.

In the final presentation, Roger Owen, Chair of BW, gave some background and details of the aims and work of the organisation, particularly the focus on major planning issues affecting the town. He also spoke of the involvement of BW in wider environmental matters, such as bridleways and footpaths, and supporting other local initiatives.

In looking to the future development of the town, Roger outlined the ongoing efforts of BW in trying to mitigate the negative impact of the massive Racecourse Approach development where up to 1,100 houses will be built over the next decade or so. Consultations with the developers, Taylor Wimpey, and Leeds City Council Planners, were ongoing with the aim of ensuring the best possible outcome for Wetherby and an 'exemplar' development on the eastern boundary of the town.

Speaking after the event Roger said ***"It was heartening that we had such a great turnout. We could have done with booking a larger room! We are fortunate that Wetherby is such an attractive town and the successful Festival is a good example of what a vibrant place it is. What a great 10 days of events. Better Wetherby was pleased to support the Festival and we will be continuing our efforts in respect of planning and helping to protect the environment."***



Left to right - Victor Hawkins, Connor Mulhall and Roger Owen

PROPOSED MALTKILN DEVELOPMENT AT CATTAL

BW is aware of a further proposed large scale housing development, planned as a new settlement around Cattal. ***There is an opportunity for members of the public to comment on the scheme by 14th November.***

BW believe that this development may have a considerable negative impact on Wetherby, in the shape of additional traffic, emissions and strain on already overstretched services, such as surgeries and schools. This was highlighted during the recent presentation at the Wetherby Festival, and it was noted that that we will already have an addition of some 15-16% to the total dwellings in Wetherby because of the Racecourse scheme. Chair Roger Owen was critical of the fact that BW had found that very few residents take note of the issues until it is too late. Roger said, ***“My experience of many Wetherby residents is that unless something is proposed at the bottom of their garden, they say nothing, but then complain when the die is cast. BW found this at the last Dickensian Market when many visitors claimed to be unaware of the impact Racecourse Approach will have on the town”.***

Harrogate Borough Council (HBC) recently [published a consultation](#) on a proposed new settlement known as Maltkiln which is ***for up to 4,000 homes*** to be built around Cattal railway station. ***Cattal is less than 5 miles from the centre of Wetherby, around 10 minutes by car.***

BW's concern is that much of the pressure from this scheme will fall, once again, on Wetherby with the development generating some 6,500 additional cars. Equally of concern is that HBC is apparently preparing to ditch its own policy on Affordable Housing provision from 40% of new developments to 20%, that this will then form a requirement for all new developments which opens the floodgates across the area. This, at a time when Central Government requirements are the opposite, where the aim is to make house ownership easier for first time buyers and the socially less well off.

There are many other factors to be considered such as increased traffic on the A59 and the lack of proper two track rail facilities at Cattal. The BW Steering Group recently discussed the issues and will be submitting representations to HBC by the deadline of 14th November. BW would strongly suggest that rather than being too late, as was the case with Racecourse Approach development, Wetherby residents should take time to consider the implications this will have for Wetherby. Details can be found on the HBC website at: www.harrogate.gov.uk/newsettlementdpd/

Comments/ responses can be made, **by the deadline of 14th November**, directly onto the [HBC portal](#), or in writing using a [comment form](#) (available on the HBC website or from most libraries in Harrogate district). You may also send comments to planningpolicy@harrogate.gov.uk Although there may well be a Public Inquiry at some future date, it is better to speak now if you feel so inclined.

LIDL – FORMAL PLANNING APPLICATION SUBMITTED

In [the July newsletter](#), we reported that the supermarket chain, Lidl, had announced their intention to submit a planning application to build a new store on the site of the Mercure Hotel on Wetherby Road, an important gateway to the town. A formal [planning application](#) was subsequently submitted in October. The proposal is to demolish the hotel and replace it with a large Lidl store along with a new elderly care facility.

In July 2012, Leeds Planning Authority refused an application by Sainsbury's to demolish the Mercure Hotel and replace it with a supermarket. **The grounds for refusal included the point 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 furthermore it would be harmful to the character and appearance of the adjacent Conservation Area.**



BW believe that the strong reasons for refusal in 2012 remain and are even more valid today. In recent years, many town centres have experienced decline with substantial numbers of empty shops. We are fortunate that Wetherby has largely avoided this problem. It remains a thriving, vibrant town, already well served with many excellent independent shops along with two supermarkets - Morrisons and ALDI – and food stores such as Marks and Spencer, the Co-op and a Sainsburys Local. The stark fact is that the impact of a new large store built at this important entrance to the town, will be considerable, as was noted in 2012. It will undoubtedly have profound and negative consequences for Wetherby, especially on our excellent local shops.

Another significant point is that since the refusal of the Sainsburys application a decade ago, the Leeds City Council Site Allocation Plan (SAP) has been published. The SAP identifies sites for housing, employment, retail and greenspace to ensure that enough land is available in appropriate locations to meet the growth targets. **The SAP states that this particular site is suitable for older person's**

housing/independent living if the hotel is to go. It also highlights the fact that the site affects the setting of the Wetherby Conservation Area and any future development should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

BW strongly opposes the Lidl application on the grounds that the reasons given for refusal in 2012 are still appropriate today and, furthermore, the Leeds SAP does not recognise the site as suitable for retail development. The decision by BW to oppose is not a reflection on Lidl and would equally apply should another supermarket wish to build on this site. This site is within the Wetherby conservation area and is just the wrong location for a new store.

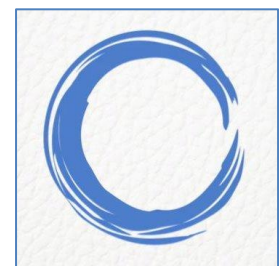
Rather than losing a reasonably priced hotel, BW believe that the town would benefit by some investment in refurbishing and upgrading the current hotel to cater for business travellers and visitors to the town and local area. We encourage local people to consider the implications for the town and make their views known to Leeds City Council Planning officials. Note that comments need to be submitted by **Friday 9th December**

Information, documents and plans regarding the development can be viewed on the Leeds City Council Planning portal: : [Ref: 22/06966/FU](https://www.leeds.gov.uk/planning/22/06966/FU)

WETHERBY AND VILLAGES CLEAN RIVER GROUP – UPDATE

In May 2022 the Wetherby and Villages Clean River Group was formed in response to serious concerns about discharges of raw sewage into the River Wharfe. A polluted river poses obvious risks to people and animals, so the aim of the Group, under the leadership of Ward Councillor Linda Richards, is to achieve Bathing Water Status for the river in Wetherby and Boston Spa.

To obtain this designation from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) it is necessary to prove that the public plays, paddles and swims in the river. To gain the necessary information, the Clean River Group arranged for volunteers to count the numbers of people on the riverbank and those playing in the river throughout the summer months. The count concluded on 30th September with the completion of over 1,000 surveys for the Wetherby and Boston Spa sites with long shot photos taken to back up



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

the count as evidence. The information was subsequently sent to DEFRA by the deadline submission date of 31st October 2022. Achieving Bathing Water Status is an important and key first step to ensure that DEFRA regularly monitors the river so it is considered clean enough to paddle, swim and play in. The initiative is strongly supported by BW with members of the Steering Group participating in the survey work.

More information can be found on their website (wetherbyandvillagescleanrivergroup.com), or twitter account ([@wavcr](https://twitter.com/wavcr)).

WETHERBY DICKENSIAN CHRISTMAS MARKET AND CRAFT FAYRE – Sun 11th Dec.

This charity event, organised by [Wetherby Lions](#), will take place in Wetherby town centre between 9am and 3pm on Sunday, 11th December. Alongside various charity stalls will be a number of commercial artisan stalls. There will be festive attractions and music from the Silver Band and other local musicians. In addition, there will be a Craft Fayre in the Town Hall. As we did at [last year's event](#), BW will have a display in the colonnade of the Shambles to highlight our work and efforts to protect the local environment. Please try to find the time to visit us and learn more about our activities. All proceeds will be used to fund the Wetherby Lions complimentary 'Senior Citizens' Persons Party' to be held in January 2023.

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT BW? CONTACT US:

If any local organisations wish to learn more about BW, a talk about our activities can be arranged. We also very much welcome and encourage 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. Please feel free to share this newsletter - the more people that are aware of these important local issues, the better.