

Newsletter March 2024

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Welcome to our latest newsletter. Thanks to computers I'm not writing this with webbed fingers, although the feet feel a bit floppy. After what seems to have been almost constant rain over recent weeks, let's hope for better weather soon and a bright and warm Spring. Speaking of that, this edition contains information about our own Spring "Conversations with BW" event on April 17th which follows on from the successful event held twelve months ago. Please watch out for further news coming shortly.

Also included here is a piece on our recent meeting with Persimmon regarding the balance of the Racecourse Approach development, which we attended together with our partners from Wetherby Civic Society and Ward Councillors, Alan Lamb and Penny Stables. Persimmon are now likely to re-submit the current Planning Application to take account of comments made.

Sadly, despite objections from BW and others, LCC has made a decision to no longer show comments about planning applications on their planning portal, so people with an interest in specific applications are 'in the dark'. This is not a good situation and LCC has indicated they won't be changing course. BW is reviewing its' next steps as the situation is not acceptable.

Also of concern and being monitored is the North Yorkshire Council threat to use Compulsory Purchase powers to enable the massive 4000 home development at [Cattal \(known as Maltkiln\)](#). The use of hard-pressed Council Tax payers money to achieve something which will have a major adverse effect on Wetherby, across all sectors of town life, is questionable and BW along with other Statutory bodies have already objected. We will be watching closely and stand ready to act.

Thanks for reading, keep dry!

Roger Owen

Chair: **Better Wetherby Partnership**

RACECOURSE APPROACH – PERSIMMON PLANNING APPLICATION UPDATE

It now looks likely to be at least several months before Taylor Wimpey (TW) actually start building the first of the planned 762 new homes on the Racecourse Approach site, north of Wetherby Racecourse. Adjacent to the TW site, Persimmon Homes wish to build a further 130. The company submitted a formal application in November 2023. Details of this can be found on the Leeds Plans Portal - [Application 23/07190/FU](#).

Along with other interested parties, BW attended a meeting on 26th February with representatives of Persimmon Homes to discuss the application. The meeting was useful and constructive. Persimmon representatives were receptive to various suggestions and amendments from BW and others. They committed to make a number of changes. The plans will now be revised and a new planning application submitted. BW will review the new plans once they are available and provide further updates in future newsletters.

"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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LIDL PLANNING APPLICATION REFUSAL

Lidl has six months to appeal following the decision by Leeds City Council's North and East Plans Panel on 19th October 2023 to refuse the company's application to demolish the Mercure Hotel and build a Lidl store and adjoining retirement accommodation. ([Application 23/01507/FU on the Leeds Council Plans Portal](#)). As yet, no appeal has been made. BW will continue to monitor the situation.

CONVERSATIONS WITH BETTER WETHERBY EVENT – 17 APRIL 2024

Since the formation of Better Wetherby in 2018, significant progress has been made in helping protect Wetherby and the nearby villages of Kirk Deighton, Collingham and Linton from excessive and harmful development. BW continues to engage in a positive way with our local community in the promotion of an effective community-led partnership approach. Whilst we have achieved some notable successes and established a substantial supporter base, we are continually looking to the future.

Following the useful 'Conversations' event at the Bridge Hotel, Walshford in April 2023, BW is arranging a similar event which will take place at the same venue on Wednesday 17th April 2024. It will include an update on our activities and outline some of the challenges ahead. Moreover, it will provide an opportunity for people to give their views about the way the town is developed over the coming years.

Invitations to the event will be sent out by email in the near future, so please keep an eye on your inbox. Please note that there are only a limited number of places available. If you wish to attend, you are encouraged to respond to the email as soon as possible.

PARKING CHARGES FOR WETHERBY TO GO AHEAD

In the last newsletter BW reported on strong local opposition to unwelcome proposals by Leeds City Council to introduce parking charges at the Wilderness and Old Station car parks. More than 5,000 people signed a petition objecting and many responded to a consultation exercise mounted by LCC. This concluded on 11th January 2024.

Yet, although the results of the 'consultation' have not yet been published, LCC made a decision in February to impose the parking charges regardless. A date for the charges to start is not yet known. BW will continue to monitor the situation.

WETHERBY HIGH SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT TO INCLUDE NEW PUBLIC LEISURE CENTRE

BW reported some time ago about plans for a rebuild of Wetherby High School. The government has committed to fully fund this. BW recently learned from Wetherby Ward Councillor Alan Lamb, that the Department for Education (DFE) has confirmed that they are aiming to appoint a contractor for the building work to start this summer.

Initially it was expected that some of the playing fields would have to be sold off to help fund the new building. However, the good news is that this is no longer the case. Leeds City Council is now working with the DFE to look at using some of the land to build a new public leisure centre as part of the re-development of the school site. Clearly there is much work ahead, but it's excellent news for the school and the local community.

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WEST YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY (WYCA) TRANSPORT CONSULTATION

A public consultation exercise on how bus services are run in West Yorkshire concluded in January. At a meeting of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) on the 14th March 2024, a decision was taken to introduce bus franchising in West Yorkshire. This effectively places bus services under the control of the local authority, in this case, the WYCA.

Under franchising, the WYCA will have responsibility for setting routes, frequency, fares and overall standards. Bus operators will have to bid to run services through a competitive procurement process managed by the WYCA. It is understood that although the new franchising system will start in April 2024, it is likely to be some time before any changes will be seen.

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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