

Newsletter November 2024

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



A very warm welcome to our latest BW newsletter. The end of another year approaches and whilst this represents a normal time for reflection, we are not quite there yet so, apologies, but my reflection will be in the next newsletter.

In the last few days it was announced that Lidl has won its appeal against a decision made 12 months ago by Leeds Plans Panel to refuse an application to demolish the Mercure Hotel and replace it with a Lidl store and adjoining retirement accommodation.

This decision is disappointing and, in the view of BW, drives a coach and horses through the planning regulations, not just here in Wetherby but nationally. The Leeds Plan and Wetherby Local Plan, are the templates for development of all types. They were the result of detailed consultation and discussions over lengthy periods. There is no allocation in the plans for a food-store or supermarket and this was the key reason for opposing Lidl. All through this lengthy saga, the position of BW has been that there is no objection to a Lidl store in Wetherby – but just not on this site which was allocated for housing. Sadly, I believe that the Inspector's decision opens the doors for other unwelcome applications, not just here but now with a 'build what you like where you like' outcome.

You will find an update regarding the Lidl Appeal below, along with one regarding the recent Malkiln Hearings. It would be remiss of me not to thank colleagues for the efforts put into both issues. BW will continue efforts going forward in trying to ensure the best for the town.

With the festive season almost upon us, the Dickensian Market on Sunday, 8th December organised by the Lions is a great way to get things up and running, BW will have representation at this event and we look forward to seeing you.

BW understands that a decision on the Wetherspoons application is expected soon. Hopefully this will be approved, the plans for the site appear to be very much in keeping with Wetherby Town Centre character and we anticipate that Wetherspoons will provide a welcome boost to the town.

Thanks for reading and all the very best for the festive season and for a happy, healthy 2025.

Roger Owen

Chair: **Better Wetherby Partnership**

"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 APPEAL SUCCESSFUL

A Public Inquiry was held over several days in October at Leeds Civic Hall following the appeal by Lidl against the decision of the Leeds City Council's North and East Plans Panel in October 2023 to refuse an application (Ref [23/01507/FU](#)) to demolish the Mercure Hotel and build a Lidl store and adjoining retirement accommodation.

During comments made by appellant's legal team it was confirmed that the hotel, which has been closed for several months, had been purchased by Lidl. A strong case was made by representatives of Leeds City Council that as the site was allocated for housing in the Leeds Plan and the Wetherby Local Plan, the land should not be used to build a supermarket. Concerns were also highlighted about the negative impact a new store would have drawing trade away from the independent shops in the town centre along with increased traffic congestion at this important gateway to the town. However, the Inspector's decision, announced on 22 November, was in favour of Lidl. The City Council are yet to comment or react to the decision but the national ramifications are potentially immense.

Further documents relating to the Public Inquiry can be found [here](#).

MALTKILN DEVELOPMENT HEARINGS

Hearings in Harrogate by a Government appointed Inspector took place in September regarding this proposed [major housing settlement](#) of up to 4,000 new homes centred on Cattal, just a few miles from Wetherby.

The Inspector made an independent examination of The New Settlement (Maltkiln) Development Plan Document which sets out a vision and policy framework to guide how the new settlement is designed and developed.

Following the conclusion of the Hearings on 20 September, at the request of the Inspector, a number of additional documents have recently been published. Further details can be found on the North Yorkshire Council planning policy website ([DPD Examination Library](#)).

Such an inspection is typically part of a longer term process which would provide guidelines for a formal planning application to take place at a later date. However, in the case of this development, the developer has submitted multiple plans since approx 2019, the latest iteration of these plans can be viewed on the North Yorkshire Planning portal (Application [19/00017/EIAMAJ](#)). Comments can no longer be made on this portal, however BW suspect that the inspectors report may result in further changes to the application – we will keep you informed

As detailed in previous newsletters (e.g. [Sept24](#), [May24](#), [Nov22](#) etc.), there are concerns that the close proximity to Wetherby of this huge settlement could place additional pressures on already overstretched local services such as doctors, dentists and schools, whilst also adding to existing problems relating to traffic and parking problems in the town.

Representatives of a Coalition of Local Parish Councils, who will be significantly affected by this huge settlement, made detailed representations at the DPD hearings and also on the planning portal. BW have also submitted comments and concerns, we will be maintaining a close watch on this application.

BW recently raised concerns about Maltkiln in a meeting with Sir Alec Shelbrooke, MP for Wetherby and Easingwold. BW also made further representations to North Yorkshire CC, along with those mentioned above and numerous Statutory Authorities. BW is very concerned at the recent alteration of the site plans and a new Planning Application for some 350 dwellings. The view of BW is that the

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recent alterations are sufficiently significant as to warrant a new Planning Application as required under Statute Law. We will continue to monitor closely.

RACECOURSE APPROACH

Those of you who walk the area will probably have noticed that Taylor Wimpey have been on site with work to create flood control Balancing Ponds and other ground works. BW will be reviewing progress with them after Christmas.

BW has had no further contact with Persimmon, who will be developing the North West section of the site, but we understand matters in respect of [their development](#) are with LCC Planners, again we will be reviewing progress early in the New Year.

UPDATE ON LCC PLANS TO INTRODUCE PARKING CHARGES IN WETHERBY

Efforts are continuing to convince Leeds City Council not to introduce parking charges at the Wilderness and Old Station car parks in Wetherby.

In the September newsletter we reported that despite over 6,000 people signing a petition opposing the proposals, LCC intended to proceed with the next stage of implementation. As part of the process there had to be a further statutory consultation in order for the Council to be able to implement the necessary traffic regulation order.

Ward Councillor, Alan Lamb, who organised the petition provided the following update on 22nd November, *'I'm delighted to report that we won the call in on parking charges in Wetherby. The Scrutiny Committee has voted 5-4 to tell the Council to reconsider their decision. It is by no means the end of the process, but this is a significant step in our efforts to stop parking charges being implemented in Wetherby.'*

The position of BW is that we firmly believe the introduction of parking charges will be damaging for the town. Whilst we welcome the latest news, and applaud the efforts of all our Ward Councillors in opposing parking charges, it is clear that there is still a long way to go in trying to convince LCC not to introduce charges.

SUCCESSFUL WETHERBY 200 CELEBRATIONS

Two hundred years ago the Duke of Devonshire sold by auction the whole town of Wetherby.



Various events took place on Saturday 12 October 2024 to mark the anniversary. An excellent exhibition in the Town Hall attracted a large number of people for a nostalgic look at Wetherby's past. Talks about 'The Great Sale' were filled to capacity and, despite a downpour, guided walks around the town were very well attended whilst the Wetherby Silver Band kept crowds in Market Place entertained.

A plaque was unveiled by the Lord Lieutenant of West Yorkshire, Ed Anderson CBE, and the bicentenary weekend concluded with a Thanksgiving Service in St James Church.

Congratulations to members of Wetherby Civic Society, working with other local organisations, in organising such a memorable event.

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WETHERBY DICKENSIAN MARKET – (Sun. 8TH December)

As the festive season approaches, it's well worth a visit to the brilliant [Dickensian Christmas Market](#) and Craft Fayre in the town centre on Sunday 8th December. Our local Lions Club volunteers do a superb job in organising this annual and enjoyable event. There will be lots of attractions along with music, singing and displays. BW will have a display stand, so please come along and have a chat to learn more about what we do.

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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