

## Newsletter October 2023

### MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



A warm welcome to our latest newsletter.

In this edition you will find updates on Leeds Plans Panel hearing where the Lidl application to demolish the existing hotel and replace it with a food store and a residential development was refused.

The newsletter also includes details of a display being held by Persimmon Homes in advance of their forthcoming application to build on Racecourse Approach. The display in Wetherby Town Hall on Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> November is open to the public. I encourage you to attend and find out more.

In addition, we highlight an event organised by the local Green Group and a current consultation about bus services. So, a pretty packed and hopefully interesting newsletter.

Thanks for reading.

**Roger Owen**

Chair: **Better Wetherby Partnership**

### LIDL PLANNING APPLICATION – PLANS PANEL HEARING 19 OCTOBER

At a meeting of Leeds City Council's North and East Plans Panel on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023, the Panel [unanimously rejected](#) an 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 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. A lengthy Report of the Chief Planning Officer, recommended refusal of the application and provided a detailed list of the reasons why that recommendation was made.

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](#). 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***

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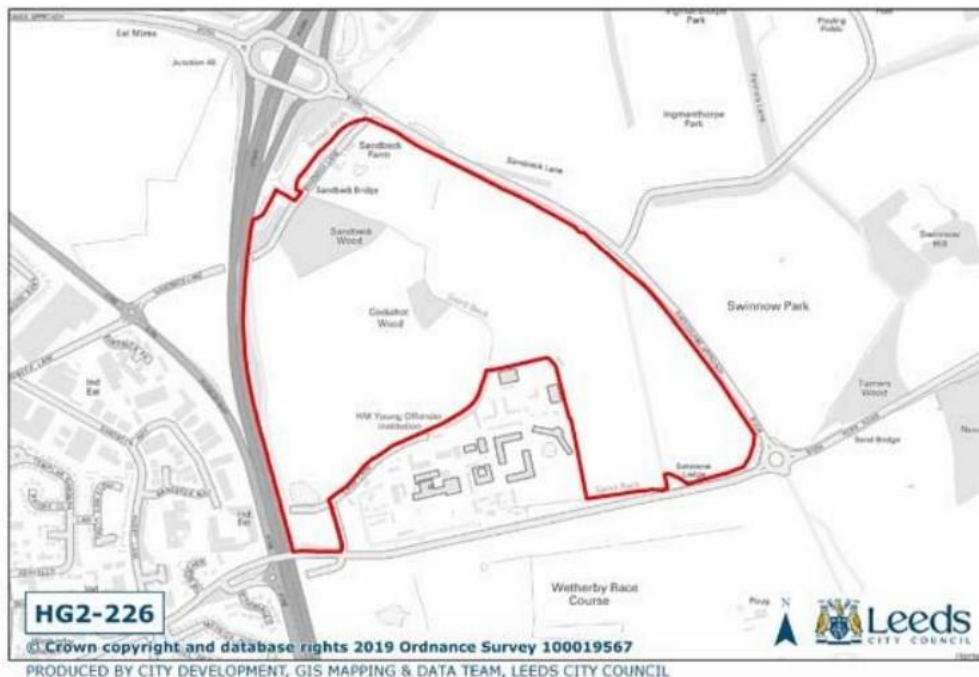
*was certainly the correct one. Although Lidl mounted a strong marketing campaign to encourage support, the fact is that this Application was flawed from the outset. I hope that Lidl will now focus on finding a more appropriate site. I also encourage the Mercure Hotel Group to make efforts to upgrade 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 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.”*

### **RACECOURSE APPROACH / SWINNOW PARK UPDATES**

As mentioned in the September [newsletter](#), Taylor Wimpey intend to start building on the Racecourse Approach site, known as Swinnow Park, in early in 2024. The site, north of Wetherby Racecourse, is in the Leeds 2019 Local Plan and is designated for up to 1,100 new homes and facilities including a local shop and Primary School. All planning applications on this site should provide 35% affordable housing.

This will be a long-term construction project taking place over several years. The Taylor Wimpey development will eventually total some 762 dwellings. The overall location plan is provided below.



The site is split into three ownerships, two of the three areas are in the Planning system and can be summarised as follows: -

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The **Yellow** area in the plan below is controlled by Taylor Wimpey and now has a full planning permission for 762 new homes, a school and a shop (LCC approval dated 12<sup>th</sup> May 2023). The approval includes a central loop and payments for a dedicated hopper bus into Wetherby every 20 minutes. Access works off Racecourse Approach are due to start in the summer of 2024 followed shortly after by a start in house building. Full details can be viewed on the Leeds Council Planning [website](#). The Better Wetherby Partnership, Wetherby Civic Society, LCC Wetherby Ward Members and Wetherby Town Council have been heavily involved in the design detail of this site.

The **Red** area is not yet subject to any planning application.

The **Blue** area is controlled by Persimmon, who are due to submit a planning application in November 2023. Access to the Persimmon development will be via an internal access road through the Taylor Wimpey development.

The house builders, Persimmon, are currently finalising a formal planning application to build on the land, adjacent to the Taylor Wimpey site. The initial intention of Persimmon was to build 300 houses. However, in a recent consultation meeting with representatives of BW and others, Persimmon announced that the actual number will be substantially less, circa 130.



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### **PUBLIC DISPLAY BY PERSIMMON HOMES - 9<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER**

In advance of submitting a formal planning application, Persimmon agreed to a proposal by BW to hold a public display of their plans for the site. They are exhibiting the layout for approximately 130 dwellings at **Wetherby Town Hall on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> November between 10am and 2pm**. All members of the public are invited to come along and ask questions of the developer on their proposals. This is your opportunity to learn more and give your views on the development.

As regular readers will be aware, BW contributed significantly to the building and design process for the TW development over many months of meetings and Design Workshops. BW will be undertaking a similar role with Persimmon Homes with the aim of ensuring a high quality, exemplar development for Wetherby.

### **CONVERSATIONS WITH BETTER WETHERBY EVENT – TO BE HELD IN EARLY 2024**

Following the useful 'Conversations' event held at the Bridge Hotel, Walshford on 12th April, BW had planned a similar follow-up meeting before the end of the year. However, due to other recent issues, this has been postponed and will now take place in early 2024. Details to follow.

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### **HAVE YOUR SAY ABOUT A “BETTER FUTURE” EVENT – SATURDAY, 11<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER**

This free public event, organised by the Boston Spa, Wetherby and Villages Community Green Group will take place in Wetherby Town Hall between **12noon and 2pm on Saturday, 11<sup>th</sup> November**. Four inspiring speakers will be sharing ideas for a better local community on the issues of:

- **Community energy**
- **Waste & reuse**
- **Transport &**
- **Community gardens.**

The organiser of the event, Adrian Balcombe, said ***“I feel this is probably the biggest opportunity for local people to have their say in a more sustainable, community focused future.”***

Interested? Want to have your say?

Reserve your FREE seat by emailing [adrian.balcombe@bostongreengroup.co.uk](mailto:adrian.balcombe@bostongreengroup.co.uk) or by sharing your details on the form [on their website](#).

### **TRANSPORT – HAVE YOUR SAY ON HOW BUSES ARE RUN IN WEST YORKSHIRE**

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) is currently holding a public consultation about the way buses are run. To help improve bus services, the WYCA is recommending a bus franchising system. The consultation exercise ends on 7 January 2023 and will inform a decision whether or not to introduce a Franchising Scheme in March 2024. To learn more and participate in the consultation, please see link: <https://www.yourvoice.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/busreform>

“On a similar note, BW made some [strong representations](#) to Mayor Brabin’s “Mass Transport” consultation earlier in the year. As a result of our active involvement, BW has now been invited to join the consultation panel and we hope over the coming months to make a positive contribution, along with LCC Ward Councillors.

### **COULD YOU HELP IN A SECRETARIAL ROLE FOR BETTER WETHERBY?**

The Chair and members of the BW Steering Group are all volunteers. We would welcome another volunteer to help with some small amounts of secretarial work for BW. Basically the role is to assist the Chair by attending the monthly BW Steering Group meetings and prepare the agenda and minutes.

If you feel you can give up a little of your time to help, please get in touch with the Chair, Roger Owen, by phone on 07973 805055 or by email at [roger.owen.3@btopenworld.com](mailto:roger.owen.3@btopenworld.com)

### **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](mailto: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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