


By email and post.

Planning Services,
Leeds City Council,
Merrion House,
110, Merrion Centre,
LEEDS LS2 8BB,
West Yorkshire.
20th November, 2022.

Dear Sirs,

Application 22/06966/FU – Mercure Hotel Site – Wetherby.

I write as Chair of Better Wetherby Partnership (BW) to object to the above Application for various reasons set out below. I confirm BW wish this objection to be posted on the LCC Plans Portal.

Retail Planning History – In 2012 a Planning Application (12/00113/ FU) was lodged for a retail store and other associated works on this site . The Application was refused by LCC, the principle grounds being impact on the vitality and viability of Wetherby centre and the location of the proposal in a Conservation setting. Significantly the Applicant did not appeal the refusal. Additionally and equally significantly, the site had no allocation in any Planning strategy at the time for retail use.

Current Planning Situation – Since 2012 the Planning situation has changed with the adoption of the Leeds Site Allocation Plan (SAP) and the Wetherby Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) and it is against both these documents that development proposals must be judged. In the case of both Plans there is no allocation of this site for the uses proposed by the above Application and thus the Application must be refused outright in the submission of BW. Put quite simply, any other outcome would render the processes undertaken in concluding the plans above, a complete waste and quite possibly expose the questioning of the whole SAP and WNP process to legal challenge. Clearly such a situation is untenable.

Further, in the case of the WNP, when put to public consultation, Wetherby people registered a substantial 89% support of the WNP proposal that any further retail should be located within the existing Town Centre, this Application site does not fall in that category.

Consultations – Clearly these are at an early stage when reviewing the LCC Planning Portal but BW is pleased to note the negative responses of consultations on Climate and Energy (not surprising given the LCC Climate Emergency), Yorkshire Water and National Highways, albeit the wording appears slightly confused (clearly LCC Highways are still to comment).

Ledbury – BW assumes that LCC are aware of the recent Appeal decision at the above where Lidl lost its Appeal against a Planning refusal by Herefordshire Council. In summary the Inspector found that the proposal would affect the vitality and viability of Ledbury centre

where the Application site is in an almost identical location to that proposed in Wetherby. I regret I cannot quote the case reference but Officers will no doubt be aware.

The similarities between the two locations are marked, putting existing store facilities with Ledbury first and Wetherby second the following comparisons exist – Tesco/ Morrison, Aldi/ Aldi, Co-Op/ Co-Op. In addition, Wetherby has Sainsbury Local. In the case of Ledbury all the facilities are within the defined town centre. Interestingly there is now a campaign for a decent hotel on the Ledbury site which would not go amiss in Wetherby.

At this point BW would make it quite clear that the objection here is not to another store, simply the location which does not comply with any adopted Planning Policy.

BW is aware of some Social Media comment which suggests that members of BW and in particular its Steering Group may have vested interests in property or existing store operations / Companies in the Town. I can categorically state that this is not the case in respect of the Lidl Application.

For the reasons above, all of which hinges on existing and live Planning Policy, this Application should be refused.

Yours Faithfully,



Chair,
Better Wetherby Partnership Ltd.

