

## **Newsletter October 2020**

### **MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR**



Welcome to the latest Better Wetherby Partnership Newsletter. I am penning this on yet another grey, damp and dismal day. It seems to me if it isn't the weather, then it's the news that is equally depressing. I sincerely hope the few minutes you take to read this will give a little (no matter how small) relief.

The activities of BWP have continued over the last months but in a much truncated form due to the many restrictions placed on everyday life and especially those around face-to-face meetings. Venues have been closed and so we have been limited to Zoom but have tried to make a go of things, thanks to the persistence of my Steering Group members.

Firstly, I would like to place on record the sincere thanks of all of us at BWP to those of you who have come forward with donations. Your generosity is deeply appreciated. I have attempted to thank all in person, but in case I have missed you, my apologies. Donations are always welcome but at the moment largely unspent. Rest assured they are in a safe place in the Bank.

Moving on we have experienced a number of changes in personnel. Clive Smithson and Mike McKinley, who were stand-in Secretary and Hon. Treasurer respectively, have both decided to call it a day, although Mike is staying involved for the time being. I would like to publically thank Clive and Mike for their sterling efforts over the short months of my tenure and before. This leaves BWP with both positions to fill and we would love to hear from anyone who wishes to join us or even existing members wishing to take a more active role. As the Treasurer role does hold responsibility for filing accounts and other duties, BWP may be able to pay a small stipend. However, as we need to make the most of our limited funds, clearly we prefer a volunteer! If you feel you can help, please contact me on 07973 805055 or by email at [roger.owen.3@btopenworld.com](mailto:roger.owen.3@btopenworld.com).

Matters still rumble on with aspects of the Bellway scheme at Spofforth Park, as you will see from the report later in the newsletter. The scheme itself is progressing to a conclusion and personally I have admired the quality of much of the construction work during my frequent Covid walks.

I know several of my colleagues share my frustrations at not being able to take BWP forward in the way we would like in these difficult times. A much needed Workshop about the housing situation in Wetherby to consider future action by BWP was due to be held, but this had to be postponed due to lockdown. The continued postponement is irritating to say the least. Hopefully we can move ahead with this before too long, as housing is such an important issue that affects all of us who live in the town. BWP will, of course, notify members as soon as we can safely hold the much needed event.

Many of you will be aware both from BWP and the general media that the Taylor Wimpey housing scheme at Racecourse Approach is to go-ahead. BWP has a seat at the developer's table and since the end of September has taken part and, indeed, played a significant role in a series of Design Workshops which will lead to Taylor Wimpey submitting their Reserved Matters Planning Application to Leeds City Council. To date these meetings have taken place on Zoom and we have provided input on subjects such as Highways, Site Layout, House types and Open Space. The aim of BWP is not to stop the development, we are beyond that, but to attempt to achieve a high quality, exemplar scheme, which will be held as a new standard, not just for Wetherby or the area, but for the wider country. Our input is being coordinated and effectively led by Paul Crossan who, you may recall,

successfully led the BWP case at the Stockeld Estate Planning Inquiry in Harrogate almost 12 months ago.

There is much to finalise, as can be expected on a site for 800 homes. Following this, BWP expects a re-run of sorts with Persimmon Homes who are to build out a further 300 homes on the same site. This huge development will clearly have a massive impact on our Town at every level, so you can be assured that BWP will continue to make every effort to achieve the best solution.

Keep safe and thanks for reading.

**Roger Owen**

Chair: **Better Wetherby Partnership**

### **SAFEGUARDING THE GAINS FROM THE STOCKELD APPEAL DECISION**

As our motto states, BWP is committed to promoting and protecting our town's future. In this respect, it is important to ensure that a planning condition imposed on Bellways housing scheme off Spofforth Hill requiring the planting of a major tree belt on the western edge of their new estate, is completed. This tree belt, allied to an existing spinney of trees on most of the remaining western boundary, is aimed at ensuring that there will be minimal visibility of Bellways new development over the very attractive rolling agricultural landscape on this gateway entrance into our town.

In dismissing Stockeld Park Estate's appeal to build 210 houses on a large part of this landscape, the Inspector noted that *'the proposals would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.'* He went on to state that he gave full weight to the conflict of the proposed housing with Harrogate Borough Council's Local Plan policy to protect the landscape of the district.

The best way to appreciate this western landscape setting of Wetherby and Kirk Deighton is by walking and cycling along the two bridleways and Harland Way that traverse in all directions across it. This has become even more important during these torrid pandemic times. To this end, BWP is mindful of the need to improve signage and good maintenance on these routes.

We are therefore in contact with the range of organisations and authorities having a responsibility or interest in looking after these routes. As has been noted from the outset of BWP, our local authority shared boundary characteristic makes the simplest of tasks far from straight forward. However, we will continue our efforts and will keep you in the picture on the outcome of these continuing discussions, in particular with Leeds City Council, Harrogate Borough Council and North Yorkshire County Council.

### **CONTACT US**

We welcome further 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](mailto:betterwetherby@gmail.com).

Please feel free to share this newsletter - the more people that are aware of these important issues, the better.