

## **PRESS RELEASE 5<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

### **LIDL SUPERMARKET - POTENTIAL PLANNING APPLICATION IN WETHERBY**

The recent announcement by the supermarket chain, Lidl, of their intention to submit a planning application to build a new store on the site of the Mercure Hotel on Wetherby Road is unwelcome and a matter of concern to many people in Wetherby.

Lidl propose to demolish the hotel and replace it with a large store, along with a new elderly care facility. They are currently canvassing the views of local residents in advance of making a formal planning application. Many people have since contacted Better Wetherby (BW) asking for the views of the organisation on the proposal.

BW point out that in recent years, many town centres have experienced decline with substantial numbers of empty shops. Wetherby has fortunately avoided this problem even through the COVID pandemic and remains a thriving, vibrant place. The town is already well served with many excellent independent shops along with two supermarkets - Morrisons and ALDI – and food stores such as Marks and Spencer, the Co-op and Sainsburys Local.

Chair of Better Wetherby, Roger Owen, said ***“It is significant that in July 2012, Leeds Planning Authority refused an application by Sainburys to demolish the Mercure Hotel and replace it with a supermarket. So when the leaflet from Lidl arrived in my letterbox, there was a strong feeling of déjà vu. The grounds for refusal 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 valid today, and I feel, even more so”***

Mr. Owen highlighted the fact that since the refusal of the Sainsbury’s application a decade ago, the [Leeds City Council Site Allocation Plan \(SAP\)](#) has been published. The SAP identifies sites for housing, employment, retail and green-space to ensure that enough land is available in appropriate locations to meet the growth targets. The SAP states that this particular site is suitable for older persons housing/independent living if the hotel is to go. It also highlights the fact that the site affects the setting of the Wetherby Conservation Area and any future development should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

Mr. Owen added ***“Better Wetherby strongly oppose the Lidl proposal. It is clear to my colleagues and I that the impact of a large new store built at this important gateway to the town, will be considerable, as noted in 2012. It will undoubtedly have profound and negative consequences for Wetherby, especially on our excellent local shops. I have communicated this to the management of Lidl and also made it clear that the decision of BW is not a***

***reflection on that company. The same decision would equally apply if another large supermarket wished to build on this site. I encourage local people to respond to Lidl with a clear message that this is the wrong place for a new store."***

For further information, please contact: Roger Owen, Better Wetherby –  
Telephone 07973 805055 or by email at [roger.owen.3@btopenworld.com](mailto:roger.owen.3@btopenworld.com).



Photograph of Roger Owen



Leaflet circulated by Lidl to households in Wetherby

***The Better Wetherby Partnership is a consortium of local people from a variety of organisations who contribute to initiatives designed to help make Wetherby and the surrounding villages better for the community of both present and future generations.***

***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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