

SPECIAL NEWSLETTER – RACECOURSE APPROACH UPDATE

10 July 2020

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Just a few days ago we went to press circulating the [July newsletter](#). At that time my colleagues and I in **Better Wetherby (BW)**, and our local Ward Councillors, were totally unaware that Leeds Planners intended calling a Plans Panel meeting at very short notice to discuss the Racecourse Approach application. You might recall that I did actually mention in the July newsletter that I expected the issue of Racecourse Approach to loom large over the coming months, but I certainly didn't expect things to develop so quickly!

This special newsletter contains some background information and the action **BW** is taking in response to this situation. It also provides details of how you can access and observe the forthcoming Plans Panel meeting should you wish to do so.

Roger Owen

Chair - Better Wetherby Partnership

RACECOURSE APPROACH – PLANS PANEL MEETING 16TH JULY

As we have outlined in previous newsletters, this application by Taylor Wimpey to build 800 new houses has been strongly opposed by **BW** during the various stages of the planning process. There have also been many individual objections from local people concerned about the negative consequences on Wetherby from the creation of such a massive development, see the [Leeds CC](#) planning portal or [our website](#).

The impact of this development will be severe, particularly in terms of increased traffic and air pollution adding to the existing highways problems of the town, together with further strain on already overburdened schools, health services, local infrastructure and services. However, despite the strong grounds for objection, in August 2019, Leeds Plans Panel approved outline planning permission subject to certain conditions. One major condition was provision to allow access to the site from York Road. This was also a requirement from the Government Inspector, when approving inclusion of this site in the overall Leeds Site Allocations Plan (SAP).

The application is to be considered once again by the [Plans Panel \(meeting of Councillors\)](#) on Thursday, 16th July 2020. The current situation is that the developers, Taylor Wimpey, have been unable to reach an agreement to purchase some land which would allow vehicular access to the site from York Road. This access point is important and one of a number of conditions imposed on the developers by the Plans Panel. In short, the conditions have to be met before they can start building. Taylor Wimpey maintain that they have made a reasonable offer for the land and, as they have not been able to persuade the landowner to sell, they now wish the condition to be removed. The company has served a Notice of Appeal which may result in a Public Inquiry if the Plans Panel do not support the removal.

In [their report before the Plans Panel](#), Leeds Planning Officers now state that there is no technical evidence to demonstrate that the absence of vehicular access at this point in York Road would be detrimental. They suggest that other access points from Racecourse Approach itself are acceptable. It is evident from the report that Planning officials are concerned that Leeds City Council is in danger of losing an Appeal by Taylor Wimpey and costs incurred by the Council in such a process could be considerable.

On being informed about this latest twist in an already protracted application, **BW** convened an urgent Steering Group meeting to discuss the situation. Representatives of **BW** will be attending the Plans Panel meeting and we are currently working in liaison with our Ward Councillors to engage with Leeds City Planners to try to resolve various issues in advance of the meeting. One of these issues relates to making representations at the meeting. In normal circumstances, objectors are given a few minutes to outline their specific reasons of opposition. In this case, the Planning Officers report states that as there are no new material issues, there are no grounds to allow public speaking at this meeting. This statement is in direct conflict to letters sent to individual objectors which states they can speak at the meeting. We believe that **BW** and Ward Councillor representations are essential at the meeting and will seek to ensure this is allowed.

The issue of removing the condition about the access point in York Road is an important one. If the Plans Panel allow the removal of the condition, then it will be in direct conflict with the approved Leeds Site Allocation Plan (SAP). Such action will call into question the relevance of the SAP and will undermine the whole ethos of the planning process.

In the event of such an outcome, then **BW** will consider writing to the Secretary of State with a view to 'calling in the application' which could result in a Public Inquiry. Whilst we sincerely hope that this can be avoided, **BW** is prepared to proceed on such a basis and work to achieve a similar outcome as with our successful efforts stopping the Stockeld Park/Hallam development of 210 houses on the Spofforth Hill boundary.

Please visit <https://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=947&MId=10008&Ver=4> to view the agenda and documentation for the Plans Panel meeting. Due to the current Government restrictions concerning the Covid-19 crisis and social distancing measures, the Plans Panel meeting will be held remotely. Access to observe the meeting on 16th July at 1:30pm can be found [via this link](#).

A report of the proceedings will be available on the [Better Wetherby website](#) and also will be reported in our next newsletter.

FUNDING APPEAL

A substantial proportion of our funds were used in connection with paying expert consultants to support BW at the successful Stockeld Park Inquiry. For those that generously contributed, we are most grateful for your support. However we need substantial funds in our continuing efforts regarding the proposed development at Racecourse Approach. Please help our efforts to protect your community. If you can assist, please consider making a donation to:

Name: **Better Wetherby Partnership Ltd**
Sort Code: **402312**
Account Number: **22537907**

See this link [Donation Request](#) further information.

CONTACT US

We welcome further volunteers and supporters to assist our efforts. We are currently actively seeking a [Secretary](#) and a Treasurer, these are roles which could possibly be combined and for which we may be able to provide an honorarium.

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.

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