
Wetherby Civic Society

Spring Newsletter

www.wetherbycivicsociety.org.uk

April 2008

Looking back on previous Newsletters one common theme was “we are still waiting to see the implementation of such and such a scheme.” This year we can look at our town and note that long awaited developments have now been completed – the upgrading of the Market Place and the improvements at the Wilderness Car Park being just two. But, of course, the work on the A1 continues. Will the recent opening of the new exit from the south make any difference to traffic in the town?

JUBILEE GARDEN

In our own parish just before Christmas we installed near the entrance to the Jubilee Garden the information board funded by a grant from Awards for All. The group from the Society and Wetherby in Bloom who work in the garden every Tuesday morning have continued their planting programme which is funded by their own efforts from an annual coffee morning. This year we have helped out with a further grant.

The garden next to the Bath House is in shade once the tree canopy develops so here the group has concentrated on spring flowering plants. The garden is at its best now, so make sure you go and see what a small group of volunteers can achieve.



If you would like to help the Tuesday morning group at the Jubilee Garden please contact either Ruth Wheeler on 01937 583186 or Margaret Dabell on 01937 581234.

WEBSITE

Martin Rowe has been busy updating and extending our website. It now has a map showing the sites of all the blue plaques in the town and also a picture with brief notes about each. The

website includes the latest blue plaque erected near the entrance to the Castle Keep apartment block provided through the generosity of the developers.

We've heard that people are now using the blue plaque page to guide them on a town centre tour. Why not try it for yourself?

DISCUSSION

At our AGM in November we had a stimulating

discussion led by our Chairman. After a general

introduction we split up into small groups and looking at

the Society's Aims and Objectives considered what was good and bad about the town. Inevitably what some thought was good others

thought was bad but overall the message seemed to be that the town was working reasonably well in providing a decent place in which to

live, work and visit. A summary of the results of the discussion is given at the end of this Newsletter.

TREES

Our seasonal round of activities continues. Peter Maun and Andrew Pullan have planted a further 5 trees along the river bank. Peter is always pleased to hear from anybody who wishes to donate a tree. Although most of these donations are in memoriam

we should not like you to think that this is the only reason for making a donation for tree planting. Since the Society was formed in 1994 we have supported or funded the planting of very nearly 400 trees and bushes. This has made a significant

difference to the look of the town. As a Society we only have access to public land but if you know of any piece of land – public or private – where tree planting would be appropriate and with a public benefit please let us know so that we can follow it up.

PLANNING

Our planning group regularly examines the list of all applications made to Leeds City for the Wetherby and Harewood Wards. It is some time since we have seen any large scale development but the group does look carefully at all applications in respect of listed buildings and any application within the Conservation Area. Through our affiliation with the Civic Trust we have

The present planning regime requires Planning Authorities to develop Local Development Frameworks. Two of our group attended a

meeting hosted by Leeds Civic Trust at which we looked at four proposals put forward by Leeds Planners for the long-term development of the City. We had seen these proposals earlier but since Wetherby was not directly involved – no large scale housing or industrial or

commented on aspects of proposed planning legislation with which we are uncomfortable and have also added our weight to representations being made on the differential VAT treatment of new build and repairs and renovations.

commercial development being envisaged – we felt that there was little point in responding then. However, what did come out of the meeting was the warning that local Societies must be aware that developers are not put off putting in applications in areas where, under the present regime, development will not be approved. These areas are known as Protected

SUMMER EVENTS

Our spring and summer events have begun with two successful visits to Ribston Hall. So many of us wanted to go that we had to put on an extra visit and still weren't able to satisfy demand. Ribston Hall is a private house with a restricted public opening programme but next year we hope to be able to arrange further visits for those disappointed this year.

For the rest of the summer we shall be visiting on:

Tuesday 20th May at 2.00pm Marton Mill, Pool-in-Wharfedale

Thursday 19th June at 7.30pm George Smith Gardens, The Manor House, Heslington, nr. York

Thursday 10th July at 2.00pm The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle

Wednesday 17th September at 6.30pm Fairfax House, York

Areas of Search. In such areas housing development will only be considered when all other possibilities such as brownfield sites are exhausted. In Wetherby we have one such area at the top of Spofforth Hill. At the meeting we were informed that developers had

put in applications to develop Protected Areas of Search in South Leeds, the assumption being that the developers would persist until permission was granted. We shall be on our guard.

THE CONSERVATION AREA

Another item arising from the meeting was that the present regime requires Planning Authorities to carry out regular appraisals of Conservation Areas. At our March lecture, Philip Ward, the Conservation officer, for Wetherby confirmed that an appraisal for Wetherby was in the pipeline. This will give us an excellent opportunity to look at our Conservation Area and see if it is working as it should.

The present Conservation Area is the historic town centre, extending westwards to take in The Ings, northwards to include Raby

Park (but not Cooper Road), the terraces on both sides of James Street and southwards as far as the first bypass bridge.

We have been assured that the appraisal may include consideration of extending the area and also taking out of it anything no longer appropriate. Is there now a case to be made to include the Victorian and Edwardian terraces to the north of the town centre and what about Spofforth Hill to the northwest of Raby Park? Inclusion within a Conservation Area does not mean the end of new development. It makes for

tighter controls on what may be done.

It may also be argued that the inclusion of The Ings is no longer appropriate since the development of the sports fields there has removed from the scene the pasture land which the Conservation Area was meant to conserve. Certainly the view westwards over The Ings is very different from what it was 30 years ago. If it was taken out of the Conservation Area it would be still protected because of its Green Belt status

Below is a summary of the findings which our discussion groups came to following the AGM last November. The headings numbered 1- 4 are taken from the aims and objectives of the Society.

1. PROMOTING CIVIC PRIDE.

- **What is it that makes the group feel proud about Wetherby?**

Community Spirit (2) [*Bracketed number indicates same item repeated by different of groups.*]

Wetherby in Bloom (3)

Christmas decorations (3)

Strong cultural spirit led by the recent Festival (3)

Volunteering (3)

Compactness, Not too big.

Sprang from a rural hinterland

Litter pickers

Shop assistants very nice and always helpful.

Strong community spirit

Friendliness

Helpfulness

Polite

Considerate

Deep rooted tradition

Pram Race

Farmers Market

Public Gardens

Coffee shops

A river, a bridge, a town hall, and a hotchpotch of shops.

- **What more might the Civic Society do to promote pride?**

Increase membership – particularly younger members.
Get Leeds to keep Wetherby as clean as the city centre.
Instilling civic pride in younger generation (not necessarily children).
Stop large lorries coming through town.
Encourage more societies to include newcomers.
Connect up with schools.
More town walks for local groups.

Encourage Leeds to take action to:
Stop parking on pavements.
Repair the Ginnel (New Inn). *Done*
Remove fear of youths in the dark.
Deal with litter, dog-fouling, chewing gum, cigarettes around pubs.

2. PROMOTING HIGH STANDARDS OF ARCHITECTURE AND TOWN PLANNING.

Of the changes that have taken place in Wetherby in the past 13 years:

- **Which ones do members of the group now feel fit in and work well?**

Old mill development
Cattle market and M&S

Sporting Facilities
Bridleways and footpaths
Ask Restaurant (moderately)

- **Have there been major successes or major mistakes? If so, in what way?**

Successes – Wetherby Cinema

Micklethwaite Farm Development

Wharfedale House

Sandbeck Business Park

Bandstand area (3)

Jubilee Gardens

Shepherd Flats (on bridge)

Catholic Church

Town centre area refurbishment (3)

- so much more pedestrian friendly - better traffic management
- easier to shop and to meet people - spacious

Mistakes - 4 Story Building on Bus Station Site

Monstrous Block near Bridge House

Riverside Court

La Locanda development (2) – too large – no view of river

Too many apartments/flats – Houses needed

Micklethwaite development – eyesore – not enough parking

Layout of ‘new’ town centre – pedestrian controlled crossings
– disabled parking spaces in wrong places

3. ENCOURAGING IMPROVEMENTS IN PUBLIC AMENITIES.

- **What do the group feel are the key public amenities in the town?**

Shops (2)
Drinking restrictions – good thing
Wilderness car park area
Weir and riverside area

Garden of rest
Good seating
Town Council taking over market
Library

- **Are there any amenities which you feel Wetherby lacks or that could be improved?**

Toilets (6) town centre and wilderness car-park – appalling and insufficient
Bicycle stands at M&S
Car parks – longer medium/longer stay needed i.e. 4 hours +
Library needs upgrading
Large community building
Access for disabled visitors
Tourist Information and dedicated Tourist Information Office

4. INFLUENCING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND THE CULTURE OF THE TOWN.

- **Is there any area or part of Wetherby that you feel is neglected and could benefit from attention?**

Large estates soulless – too big
Area behind New Inn.
Harland Way entrance next to Masonic Hall.
Trees along railway line footpaths need managing (now under consideration by Leeds City).
Hedges hanging over pavements.
Roads need repair.
Crossley Street Car Park – looks soulless at present.
Westgate – Pavements poor – Dirty – car parking on road and/or pavement hinders traffic.
Linton Road – pavement too narrow.
Crossley Park – who owns now?
Lack of facilities for Youths
Affordable Housing

- **How might the culture of the town be further developed?**

Larger hall for local groups (2) – theatre?

A dream – Re-instatement of the railway.

WETHERBY CIVIC SOCIETY

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