
Wetherby Civic Society

Spring Newsletter

May 2002

BUILDINGS FOR PEOPLE

No one will have escaped the recent debate in the national press regarding the shortfall of housing particular at the lower end of the price scale. Having members of one's family working and living in the London area one is made vividly aware of the pressures facing young people as they attempt to climb on to the housing ladder but how once on it they see the value of their property increasing by amounts that seem to bear no relationship to other values. In Wetherby we may have been sheltered from the worst of the property boom of the Southeast but for how much longer?

Is it now possible to purchase anywhere within Wetherby a family home for less than £100,000? Would it be right to insist that in every new development there should be a proportion of homes only available to say first time buyers or those on low earnings? But in a market economy have we a right to expect developers and builders to act as social engineers and is it possible to expect one section of a house owning community to forego a general rise in values by putting restrictions on future sale values which would be necessary to maintain a stock of so called affordable housing?

Micklethwaite

It is not for an amenity Society such as ours to attempt to answer such questions but we must be pleased that in the new development proposed for the Micklethwaite Farm site there will be an element of social

housing provided through a housing association. This should go some way to alleviate genuine fears that first time entrants are priced out of the Wetherby housing market.

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS SEPTEMBER 2002

Look out for the Society's contribution to the national Heritage Open Days event in September. We shall be offering free guided walks of the town centre on Saturday 14th September at 4.00pm and 6.00pm and Sunday the 15th at 11.00am and 2.30pm. Full details will be included in the Guide to Leeds Area events and in the local press.

Why not join us on one of the walks and learn something about the town and its history.

Are you able to help on either or both of these two days - maybe as a guide or as a "sweeper-up" of stragglers? If so please let the Secretary know as soon as possible.

Let us hope that the delay in progressing the planning application is temporary and that we shall soon see work begin on an imaginative attempt to bring back into productive use a site which has for too long remained abandoned and derelict.

The Cavalry Barracks

Within the site there is the old cavalry barracks. This is a listed building dating from the early

nineteenth century exhibiting the good taste and classical proportions which the later Georgian era managed with such ease. The building is now in a poor state of repair but the developers are intending to restore it and convert it into an apartment block. The building is not only a fine example of its type but, of course, has historic connections with the town and county having been the billets for troops of the Yorkshire Hussars and Yorkshire Yeomanry. Maybe nowadays its reputed early history is not to our taste since it appears that it was built to provide a base for troops involved in the suppression of civil rights protests which were common in northern towns and cities in the turbulent period after Waterloo.

Apartment Blocks

For the moment the Micklethwaite development is the only site within Wetherby where a variety of housing types and sizes are proposed. The other major developments with which the Society has been concerned are all for blocks of flats. Again perhaps it is a comment on how society is changing that builders and developers perceive a need for housing units which will be occupied by perhaps two people at the most. Even if it is on a smaller scale, what we are seeing in our town centre is replicated throughout many other town and city centres. It is not so very long ago that people were worried that branches of banks and building societies were replacing town centre retail shops. Now banks and building

societies are giving way to flats, multiplex cinema complexes and retail shops and restaurants.

We were pleased to see that our representations regarding the designs and materials to be used in the development on the former cattle market site were successful. This site will also have some commercial units as well as flats.

Once completed this will bring back to life a prime town centre site which should be for the ultimate benefit of the town.

Super Store

Work goes on apace at the Morrison's super store site but so far this is restricted to the parking areas. As part of the outline

planning permission an all-weather hockey pitch has to be completed at the High School.

We are still waiting to see detailed plans for the superstore itself.

TRAFFIC & AMENITIES

Since our autumn Newsletter we have seen the long delayed implementation of the Heavy Lorry ban on the through route to Harrogate. Our impression is that this has reduced the noise and inconvenience suffered. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some vehicles have diverted to the Collingham - Harewood route which has been confirmed by a recent sighting in Collingham of one of the quarry lorries which regularly made the journey through Wetherby to the distress of local residents and town centre users.

Traffic Exhibition

Still no news on proposals following from the excellent traffic management exhibition held last summer and early autumn. The Society has been supplied with details of the public

response to the exhibition. 2,219 comments were received of which by far the largest number related to parking. A parking survey has been completed but its results have yet to be made available to the public. On the introduction of a one way system those commenting were evenly divided between those supporting it and those against.

On general traffic issues most respondents were in favour of the introduction of traffic calming measures, extending or introducing speed limits, improving notorious junctions such as Bridgefoot, York Road/North Street, York Road/Audby Lane and Linton Road/Spofforth Hill, introducing pedestrianised areas round the Town Hall and improving or introducing pedestrian crossings.

All traffic matters are complicated by the imminent closure of the first bypass bridge for much needed structural repairs and by the longer term implications of road junction modifications which will be needed when the A1 is upgraded to the north of the current bypass bridge.

Wharfedale Lawn

It has taken some time to come to fruition but this summer should see the completion of the soft and hard landscaping at the public gardens at Wharfedale Lawn. This will give access to the Georgian Bathhouse in the grounds of Wharfedale Lawn. The Society is hopeful that this will prove to be a popular and useful public amenity.

The response from members for our summer events has been overwhelming. Our many thanks to Lis Stretton who as always has compiled an interesting and varied programme

Enjoy the summer!

WETHERBY CIVIC SOCIETY

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