

Bear Flat – Description of the Area and its Assets

Bear Flat is a mainly residential area located south of Bath City Centre. Like many suburban areas, it is difficult to define its boundaries precisely. The attached list of streets best describes the broad extent of the Bear Flat area.

A local centre along the main road of Wells Road/Wellsway was defined in the Local Plan for Bath, and this provides an established shopping and service centre for the Bear Flat community.

1. Retail and Service (Commercial) Assets

Bear Flat local centre includes the following:

Shops

Bear Interiors
Bear Pad (locally grown vegetables, meat and chicken, eggs and dairy produce) *also a café, see below*
Carphone Warehouse
Co-operative supermarket
Da Vinci (delicatessen) *also a café, see below*
Floral Touch
House of Radiators
McColls general store
Majestic Wine Warehouse
Post office (accommodated in McColls)
Rolfey's, second hand furniture / antiques
Charity shop
Wellsway pharmacy

Services

Andrews / Mark Naylor / Fidelis, estate and letting agents
Bath Health Care Centre
J and R's Unisex Hairdresser
Maple Audio
Nino's Barber Shop
Pure - Health and Beauty
Space Gym
Accountants above shops – Flatout and former butchers
Rosamund Coppen and Company, Solicitors

Food and drink

Da Vinci, cafe
The Bear Public House
Menu Gordon Jones bistro / wine bar
Mouchuck, Indian restaurant / take-away
Pizza Fresca, pizza take-away
Bear Pad, cafe

Outside the Bear Flat local centre, additional assets include:

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Shops

Tesco Express, 52 Wellsway

Services

Bed and Breakfast / Guesthouses - various

TP Richards / Newlook Windows, 75A Wellsway.

Food and drink

Devonshire Arms PH

2. Public buildings

In addition to the shops and commercial services, Bear Flat contains a number of educational and health facilities, community meeting halls and places of worship, as follows:

Churches and Chapels

St. Luke's, St. Luke's Road

Beechen Cliff Methodist Church, Shakespeare Avenue

St. Mary Magdalen, Holloway

Halls

St. Luke's Church hall

Bruton Community Hall / Bear Flat Pre-School

Schools

Beechen Cliff School

Hayesfield Upper School

Playgroup, Wellsway

Health Centres

Oldfield Surgery

Dentists, various on Wellsway and towards Oldfield Park

3. Residential areas

The overall built quality of the Bear Flat area with its extensive Bath stone buildings is reflected in its conservation area status.

An 'Article 4' direction exists within the Conservation Area and prevents any householder from demolishing any front boundary wall fronting the highway which could otherwise allow the provision of individual off street parking spaces and losses of front gardens.

The Council has guidance on living in a conservation area at

<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/planning-and-building-control/conservation-areas>

A number of characteristic areas may be approximately identified within the locality:

a) 'Poets Corner' terraces:

Good quality Edwardian, stone faced, relatively uniform terraces, un-punctured by on site private car parking or fronting dormer windows / roof extensions. The upper parts of Kipling Avenue and cul-de-sacs of Milton and Longfellow Avenues north of Chaucer Road include interwar bungalows

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and semi-detached houses with off street parking. Several terraced properties on Wellsway have been subdivided into flats and include a number of Bed and Breakfast / Guesthouse uses.

b) Bruton Avenue

To the rear of the local centre which comprises retail units with upper floor apartments, a terrace of late Victorian houses and early 21st century infill terraced town houses on the site of the Bruton Avenue Gardens and garages.

c) Devonshire Place/ Devonshire Buildings: (south side)

Georgian three story terrace, stucco fronted dwellings with relatively generous front gardens, unspoilt by on-site parking. Mews style appearance at the rear with later 20th century infill development to the south (e.g. Attewell Court, Devonshire Court and Greenwood Court.

d) Beechen Cliff Road / Prospect Place

Miscellany of Georgian and late 19th houses and villas plus Edwardian terraces. Prospect Place is almost hidden in the trees – the area's hidden street.

e) Holloway

The original Wells Road, upper parts of historic character with 18th century raised pavement, 15th century chapel, 18th century houses and historic well / horse trough; lower parts controversially redeveloped in the 1960s/70s.

f) Residential roads / avenues leading off to the west of Wells Road

Mostly mix of late 19th century villas and Edwardian houses some divided into flats, with some in use as institutional or Bed & Breakfast / Guesthouse use. Front gardens of larger properties frequently given over to private car parking.

f) Bloomfield Road

Regency dwellings with paved frontages and extensive rear gardens, mid-late Victorian villas and post war apartment building.

g) Hatfield Road /St Luke's Road, Hayesfield Park, Greenway Lane, Old Wells Road / Entry Hill

Each of these areas contains predominantly residential dwellings with their own distinctive form and characteristics.

k) Wellsway/ Wells Road

In addition to being the main arterial road through Bear Flat and containing the defined local centre for shops and community facilities, this route is lined with mainly terraced residential properties from the Victorian era.

4. Parks and Open spaces

Beechen Cliff - woods, walks, views

Alexandra Park - with city and distant views, children's play, boule piste, bowling green, public toilets and informal grassed areas

Beechen Cliff School playing fields, visual and wildlife interest; crossed by a number of footpaths

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Lyncombe Farm allotments

Bloomfield open space, mainly grassed, with children's play area and access to Sustrans route / Linear Park

Bloomfield Road allotments

Bloomfield Tennis Club

Bloomfield Avenue private open space with tennis courts

Magdalen Gardens

The Triangle (between Wellsway and Bloomfield Road) also known as The Gore, with a disused drinking fountain and grass. Formerly there were subterranean toilets (filled in, 2013). The fountain is listed grade II with this official description:

A drinking fountain, believed to have been erected in 1897, constructed of limestone, with elements of pink granite and grey granite. The style of the fountain is an eclectic mixture of Romanesque, Gothic and Baroque; its structure comprises a niche set within a limestone surround, with volutes supporting an ogee arch, which terminates in a fleur-de-lis crocket finial. The niche is framed by colonnettes of pink granite, with grey granite bases and limestone stiff-leaf capitals (one of these is damaged), from which rises a trefoil arch within a round-headed arch, with foliate carving to the cusps. The projecting basin is of pink granite; the grey granite tablet from which water originally issued carries inset metal lettering, reading: 'TO COMMEMORATE / QUEEN VICTORIA'S / 60 YEARS REIGN / 1837-1897'.

5. Roads / Transport and Movement

Wellsway / Wells Road

This major arterial road (A367) to Radstock largely bisects the Bear Flat area. It carries large volumes of traffic and experiences congestion in peak periods. Nevertheless, it does, by virtue of its connectivity, facilitate a range of bus services to the south; correspondingly these, in combination, provide a frequent bus service into the city centre.

Other roads

For the most part other roads in the local area provide for the servicing of a residential environment. However, few of these residential roads have been designed for the current level of car ownership, and consequent parking demands, now exacerbated by commuter parking. In addition, a number of residential roads are currently critically subject to service and parking demands from adjacent uses, such as schools and surgeries.

Cycling

Notwithstanding the hills, the area has the benefit of a relatively safe North - South cycle route via Holloway, and is well placed to take advantage of the 'Two Tunnels' cycle route, presently being developed, which will provide links to the established Bristol-Bath Railway Path and Radstock via Midford (Sustrans Routes 4 and 24 respectively).

Pedestrian routes/ Footpaths / Pavements

The local area enjoys a comparatively high standard of pedestrian footpaths, and benefits from a number of attractive, pedestrian routes / short cuts, such as Holloway / Beechen Cliff and the well used link routes between Bloomfield Road and Maple Grove and the "Poets Paths" linking Shakespeare Avenue to Devonshire Buildings at the rear of properties in Wellsway. Against this, however, is the growing incidence of vehicles mounting pavements and spoiling surfaces particularly on Kipling Avenue above Chaucer Road. Extensive parking in residential roads tends to detract from the pedestrian experience, and make crossing the road more dangerous.

6. Focus: actual / possible

Actual

Alexandra Park (see above)

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The Bear (see above). Its prominent and well-known polar bear commanding the local centre and the major route is the area's visual icon.

Potential

Bloomfield open space (see above) is pleasant but short of its potential. The new access to the cycle route leading to the two tunnels and the Linear Park ought to spark more improvements.

Hayes Place. Could be redesigned to have less vehicle surface and more pedestrian or shared surface, with the potential to provide some conceptual, unifying identity.

The Triangle/The Gore (see above) Prominent but unloved, a sad legacy of an era when Bear Flat had its own public toilets and drinking fountain. Now a repository for bulky street furniture such as mobile telecommunications equipment. It is overlooked by the terrace of Elm Place (to which at one time it belonged). Potentially this could be a focal open space.

First published on BFA web site April 2013
Last revised October 2013