

Introduction to the Bear Flat Local Centre Vision

Timothy Cantell



Bear Flat Local Centre Vision Bear Flat Association

Why did the BFA prepare a Vision for our Local Centre? Because we could lose it. Let's use it. Let's improve it.

The Centre has lost Rolfeys, the PO recently; earlier a bank and greengrocers. It could lose more. The Carphone Warehouse unit is vacant, there is likely to be one unit empty in the Andrews, 'complex' and the Silver Bear has just closed in favour of online trading. The Centre could become 'Real Estate Central'! Let's get more people to use it. Let's move from a vicious circle to a virtuous circle.

Promoting the Centre

- Signs
- Leaflet
- Media good recent publicity

But tonight is mainly about improving the Centre:

- Drab to lively, leafless to leafy, grey to green;
- Civilize traffic; and
- Community focus, places to gather and linger.

What resources do we have?

BFA

Bear Flat Environment (a Charitable Incorporated Organisation)

Community

Experts in the area willing to help

What resources we might get:

Council funding: Winston to speak later

Grants

The Bear Local Flat Centre



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Don't expect too much too quickly: but there are some grounds for optimism.

So to our ideas - and they are ideas not plans at this stage. We will do more consultation (e.g. traders, Council, bus operators, Sustrans and others) and we will have expert guidance.

Here are our first ideas, shown in three segments, working from south to north.

Each segment is outlined by a member of the BFA Planning and Transport Group of the Bear Flat Association.

Wellsway & Bloomfield Road Junction / The Gore Gareth Somerset

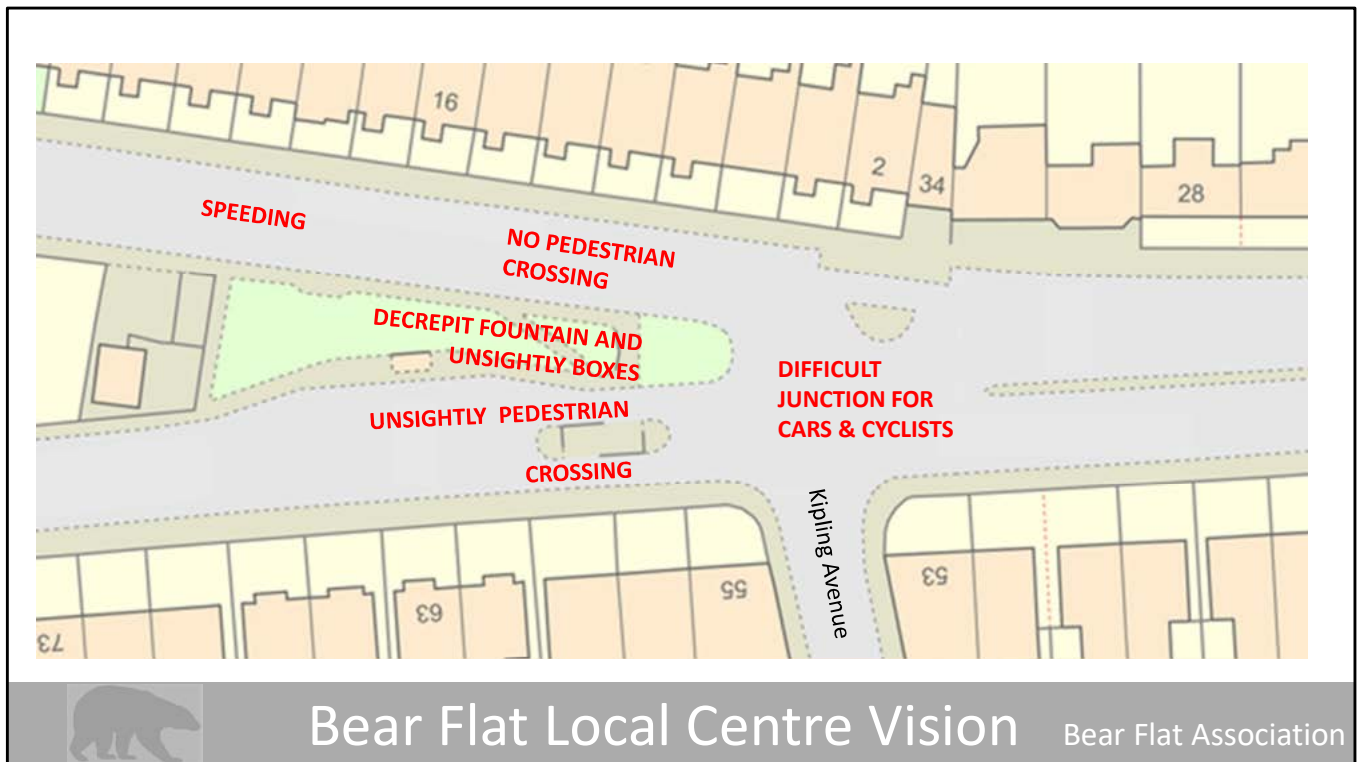


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Southern most part of the Bear Flat centre, an area that has been for some time the focus of BFA's interest with respect to The Gore

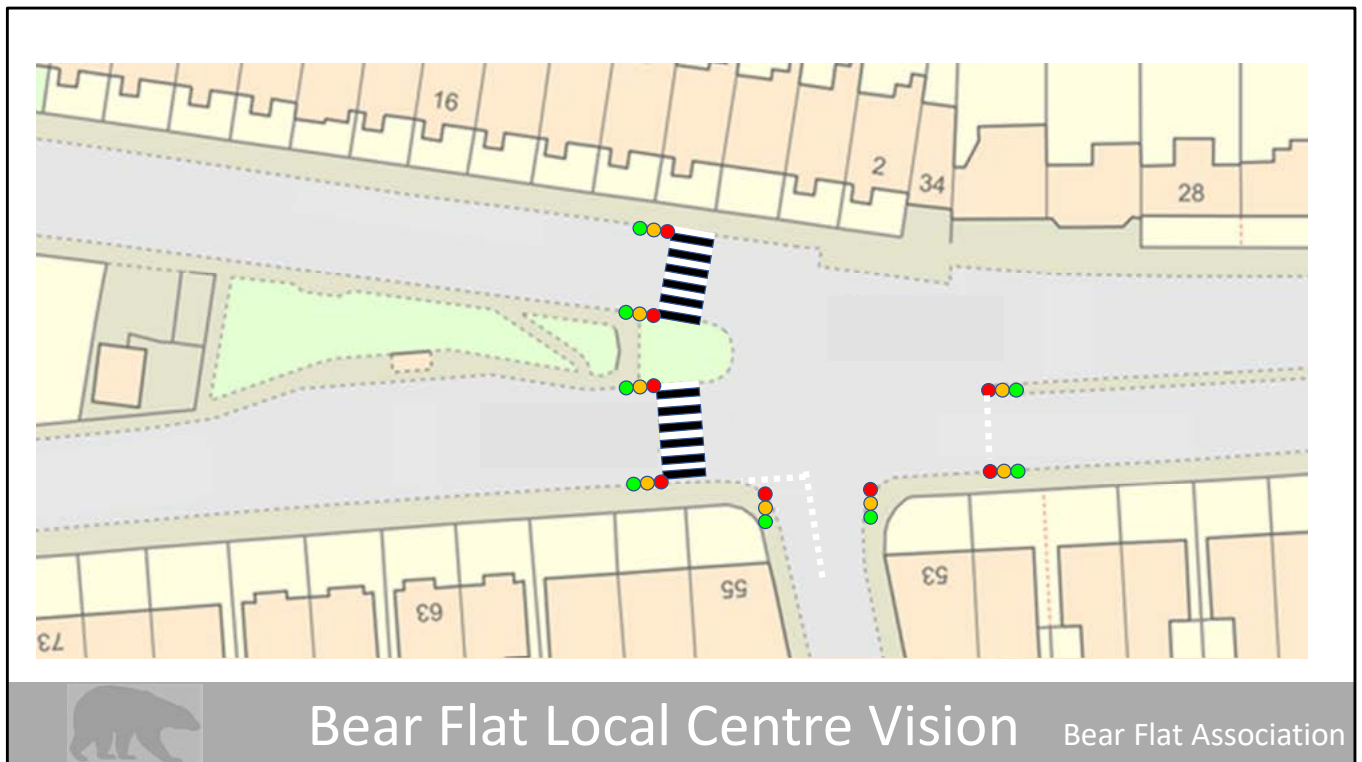


A little orientation



Important, busy and difficult junction between Wellsway and Bloomfield Road, compounded by pedestrians crossing Wellsway and Bloomfield Road, as well as the Kipling Avenue side road.

No pedestrian crossing over Bloomfield Road and an unsightly crossing over Wellsway
The problem of speeding on Bloomfield Road
A difficult junction for traffic, especially for cyclists.
Attention needed for The Gore



Addressing traffic flow. **These are just ideas for discussion** and would in any case require the blessing of B&NES Highways.

One approach might be to use traffic light control

“Yet another set of traffic lights?” but it would slow traffic which can move too quickly through the junction.

TL controlled pedestrian crossing that uses the north end of the Gore as a safety island – the sight of the old u/ground toilets – land still the responsibility of Highways, not Parks, unlike the rest of the Gore.

Allows removal of unsightly pedestrian island on Wellsway.

Minimal loss of parking on Bloomfield Road – the kerb to the right of the zebra crossing in front of Elm Place is mainly double yellow lines now.

A raised pedestrian crossing may help calm the traffic on Bloomfield Road

This design should create a very safe junction for all users, but may be considered too expensive.

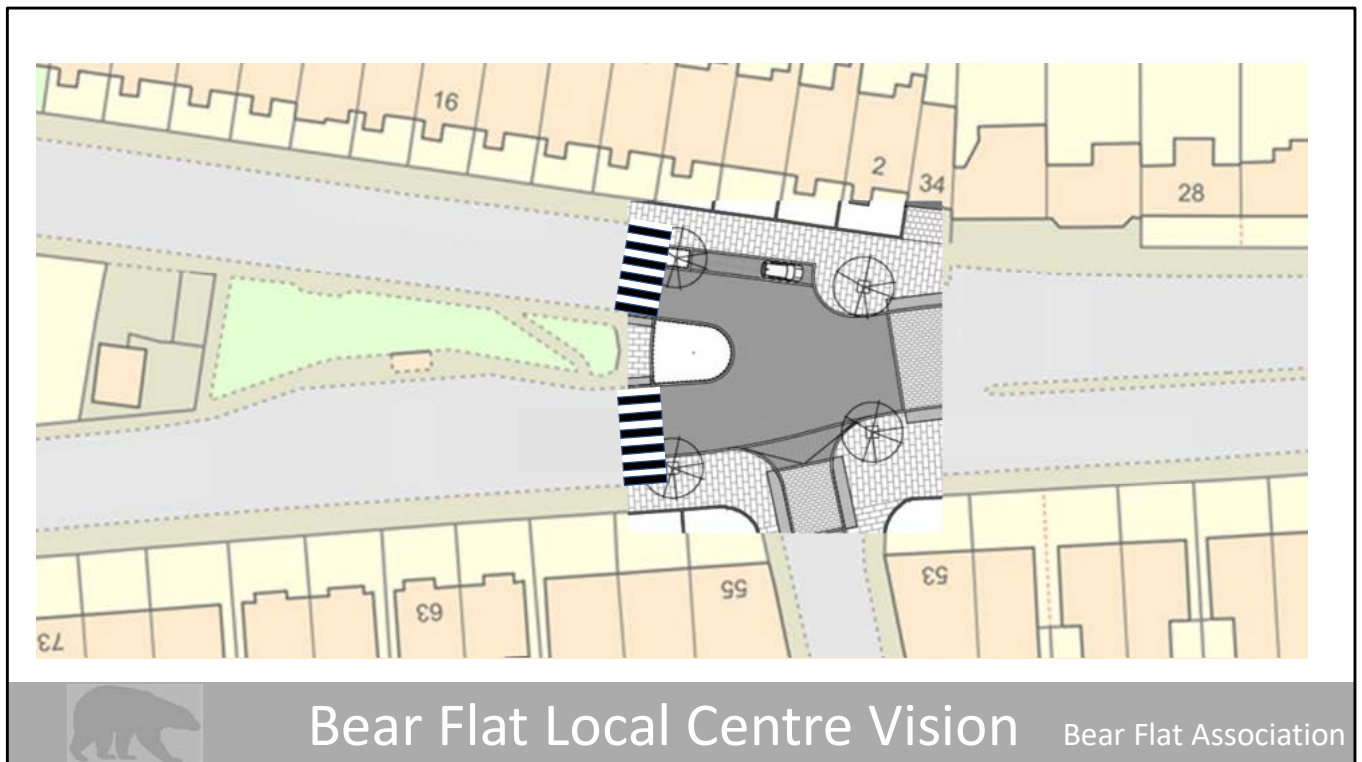


A less expensive approach would be to use a mini-roundabout for traffic control. This should slow traffic and make the junction safer to use.

The pedestrian crossing may need to be moved back from the junction and in the absence of pedestrian traffic lights it may be necessary to have a safety island, especially on Wellsway.

Common to both of these design options is what happens to the bus stop immediately in front of 2 Elm Place, ie whether these designs allow it to stay or whether it would need to be moved.

So here are just two design ideas to illustrate possible improvements to the junction.



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Wellsway

Jill Kingaby



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I live on Wellsway within Bear Flat centre and this is a view from my house.

Context and Transport Issues

- Wellsway, with its community facilities, is at the heart of Bear Flat Local Centre
- Wellsway is an “A” road with traffic-related problems for shoppers and pedestrians:
- Noise and disturbance
- Air pollution
- “severance” – inconvenience and safety risks for people crossing the road.



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Wellsway lies at the heart of Bear Flat Centre, linking The Gore to Hayes Place. Wellsway is a designated “A” road, which will have to deal with through traffic and resultant problems for the foreseeable future – the main problems being noise and disturbance, air pollution (causing harm to human health & contributing to climate change), and severance i.e. inconvenience and safety risks for pedestrians and cyclists needing to cross the busy main road.

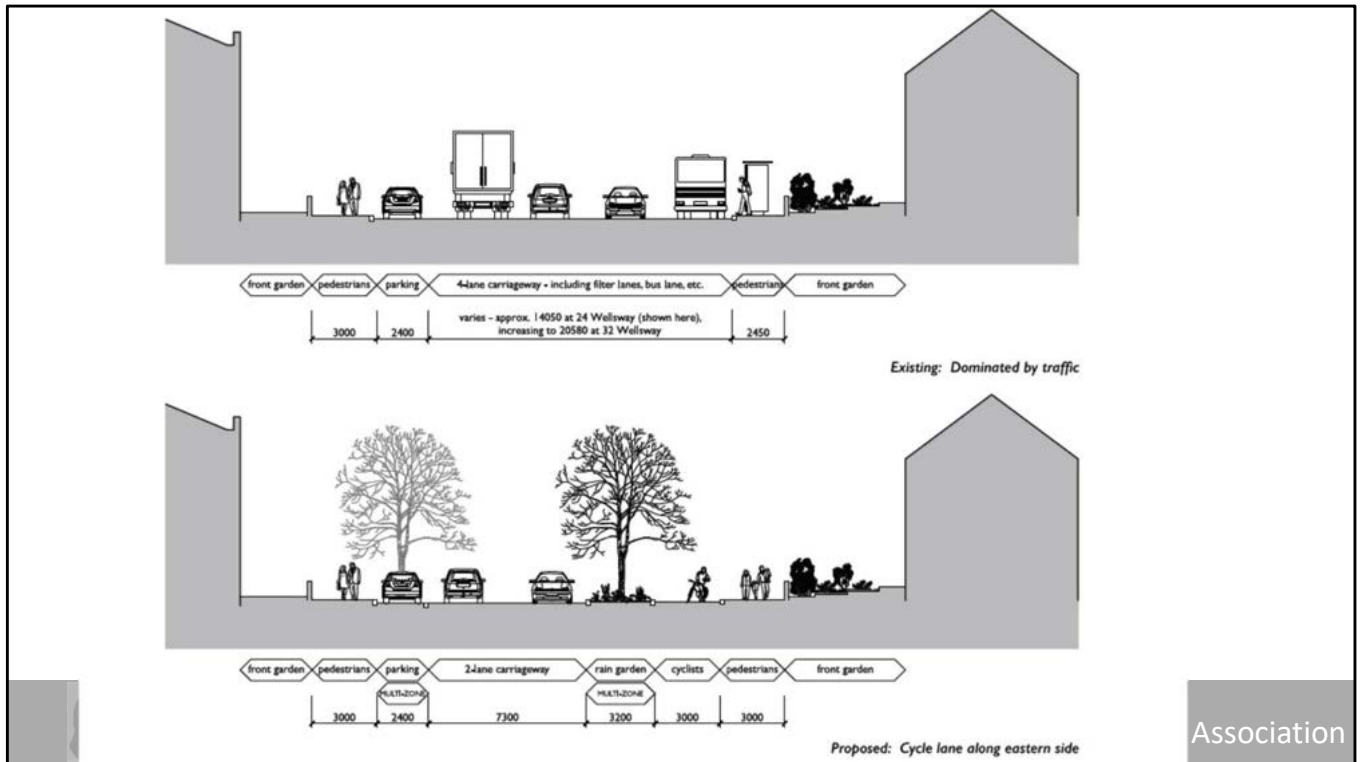
Our Vision

- Better balance between pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles
- Carriageway widths reduced and speeds limited along Wellsway
- Enhanced pavements, with better crossing facilities at Bloomfield Road, and across the Avenues - Devonshire Buildings to Bruton Avenue
- Safety and convenience for cyclists on Wellsway, with good access to the Two Tunnels
- Bus stops – Safe and accessible for bus-drivers, passengers & other people
- Essential parking space for residents and businesses.



Our vision is to re-design Wellsway to make it a more attractive place to shop and visit. There is no masterplan yet, but we are working on one which will incorporate the following:

- (1) a better balance with more space given to pedestrians and cyclists rather than motor vehicles;
- (2) narrower, ideally single, carriageways, and speed limit reduced to 20mph;
- (3) Wider pavements, especially on the eastern side of Wellsway, which caters for people walking from Devonshire Buildings and Poets' Avenues towards the Co-op & other shops, as well as users of the bus stops, & pupils walking to Beechen Cliff School. The junctions of Wellsway with Bruton, Shakespeare, Kipling and Bloomfield Avenues could be improved, so that pedestrians can cross more easily and safely;
- (4) A secure route for cyclists should be provided on Wellsway, with cycle parking facilities, as well as access to the Two Tunnels, by way of Bloomfield Road & Bloomfield Green;
- (5) Regarding bus stops, if single carriageways only for motor vehicles are introduced, bus laybys may be needed. Amalgamation of the two bus stops at the bottom of Shakespeare Avenue would improve visibility for motorists travelling down Shakespeare, although we note that the bus company has expressed opposition to this in the past; and
- (6) On-street parking for residents and businesses near the junction with Bloomfield Road should be retained, but may need to be reconfigured, having regard for changes proposed at The Gore.



Thanks to Lucy Fair for these illustrations of Wellsway looking northwards. The top drawing shows the current situation “*Dominated by Traffic*”, with 4 lanes of traffic, narrow pavements and limited space for bicycles. The drawing below shows a 2-lane carriageway, a wider pavement to the east, a cycle lane, and a garden space with trees. Just an option but it reflects our vision.

Environmental Improvements

David Fenton

Tree planting along the edges of pavements
Planters on west side of Wellsway



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Jill has identified the potential there is to carry out significant physical changes to the centre if the amount of carriageway on Wellsway given over to motor vehicles can be reduced. These may take a great deal of discussion and time before such changes can be made.

However, there are still many things that can be done more immediately to improve the environment, to “green” the centre.

Even within the existing space available some tree planting, either in raised boxes or in the ground could be achieved.

Planters could be provided at various locations, including in front of the properties on the west side of Wellsway, where these are set back a little from the roadway. These could include cycle parking and informal seating.

Environmental Improvements

Murals and a clear identity for Bear Flat

Artwork for Hayes Place and / or The Gore

Provision for Christmas decoration along shop fronts



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We should make use of the considerable artistic talent that exists in the Bear Flat area e.g.

- There is a potential to create a mural on the side of the charity shop in Bruton Avenue, welcoming people to Bear Flat;
- There is the opportunity to have murals on the blank walls of the Majestic Wine Warehouse and the blank windows of the Coop; and
- Any scheme for the Gore or Hayes Place offers the potential for some form of artwork/sculpture, including perhaps a “village” style sign.

Provision could be made for Christmas trees and lighting and banners within the centre.

Environmental Improvements

Attractive seating area alongside The Bear and on other areas along Wellsway
Making the most of the Majestic Wine / Carphone Warehouse site



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There is space in front of and especially to the side of the Bear Public House to feature an attractive seating area, with substantial planting, with pergolas and planters.

Elsewhere, any opportunity should be taken to provide casual seating around the centre.

And finally, to comment that the Majestic and Carphone Warehouses site offers great potential, but this is not in public hands and will need to be considered as opportunities arise.

Hayes Place

Christopher Isaac



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Hayes Place is characterised by traffic, surplus road space and parked vehicles, making it intimidating for pedestrians to cross.

To remedy these problems, the aim is:

- To reduce the road space, to that which is necessary for vehicle movement and parking;
- To make it safer for people to cross the road and circulate generally;
- To use the left-over road space, to improve the quality of the pedestrian environment.

Two alternative sketch design approaches have been considered.



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The first sketch design approach aims to maintain the current number of parking spaces, by arranging the relocated vehicle spaces in a herring-bone formation.

- Pedestrian safety is improved with two pedestrian crossing points, at either end of a 'green' raised table, where pedestrians share priority with vehicles.
- Widened pavement on the side of the Wellsway chemist shop and the 'Good Bear', can then provide for tree planting, occasional seating and innovative floor-scape design.



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The second sketch design approach allows for the loss of three / four vehicle parking spaces.

- Pedestrian safety is improved with two pedestrian crossing points, at either end of a 'green' raised table, where pedestrians share priority with vehicles.
- A more extensive pavement area can then provide for bolder landscape treatment, making Hayes Place a much more attractive place to be... and pass the time of day.