



Somer Valley Links:

Response to the consultation concerning the proposals for the A367 at and near Bear Flat from the Bear Flat Association (BFA)

1 Introduction

BFA supports the aims of the Somer Valley Links project and welcomes the consultation.

We took part in the 2021 consultation and have had a meeting and site visit with Nik Bowyer from the WECA/BANES team in 2022.

Although the published material is organised by themes, we propose to respond by geographical zones, taking all themes for each of three areas, south to north:

A367 Wellsway, south of Bear Flat Centre

From the Wellsway/Hatfield Road junction north to the Wellsway/Bloomfield Road junction

A367 Wellsway/Wells Road: Bear Flat Centre

From the Wellsway/Bloomfield Road junction north to the Hayesfield Park (south) junction

A367 Wells Road, north of Bear Flat Centre

From the Wells Road/Hayesfield Park (south) junction north to the Wells Road/Hayesfield Park (north) junction.

This submission has been drawn up by BFA in **consultation** with our c400 members.

One over-arching comment is that changes to the A367 should be underpinned by good **traffic data**, reflecting recent surveys of vehicles along the A367 through Bear Flat, and also counts of numbers turning at key junctions. Also, future projections. We have not seen such data, but our views are based at least on local knowledge.

2 A367 Wellsway, south of Bear Flat Centre

From and including the Wellsway/Hatfield Road junction north to the Wellsway/Bloomfield Road junction.

NB BFA is not commenting on changes for the Wellsway south of Hatfield Road, as this lies outside our area.

BFA supports widening the pavements at **Hatfield Road** and creating a new-style pedestrian crossing.

It is not clear where **cyclists** are to go northbound once they reach the northern end of the proposed cycle path. As the scheme is now, cycles would then have to mix with general traffic under a 30-mph limit on Wellsway (until they reach the bus lane on Bear Flat). This would strengthen the case for a 20-mph limit on Wellsway, at least north from Hatfield Road.

We welcome the **trees and landscaping** shown south of the Greenway Lane junction.

BFA is inclined to support making **Hatfield Road East** (Greenway Lane to Wellsway) only for cycles and access, but a final view would need data on the current use and direction of traffic using it. We stress a restriction must include access as there is a vehicular opening to the property on the south side (Devonshire House).

BFA supports the pedestrian priority and tighter geometry at the Wellsway junction with **Devonshire Villas** (leading also to Old Wells Road). This is likely to slow southbound traffic turning left from Wellsway (often speeding and dangerous now), making the junction safer.

A gap in the proposals is that there is no pedestrian priority at the Wellsway junctions with **Kipling, Milton and Longfellow Avenues** and **Devonshire Buildings**. We see this as an anomaly as there are six avenues running east from Wellsway forming a coherent group known as Poets Corner, so it is odd to modify two of them (Bruton and Shakespeare Avenues) but not the other four.

We assume the **pelican crossing** north of Devonshire Buildings is unchanged. Certainly, there is a need for a crossing at or near this location. The option of a light-controlled junction at **Wellsway/Devonshire Villas** could be looked at here, that is the traffic lights would have phases for pedestrians and cyclists and so could replace the pelican. BFA would oppose *additional* traffic lights. But *replacing* a crossing with traffic lights might make sense here.

WECA should be aware of the situation at **Tesco** where vehicles cause congestion and reduce sight lines: delivery lorries have to unload from Wellsway and some customers park on Wellsway rather than use the car park (from which some drivers reverse out onto the main road!).

We support **wider pavements** as proposed for both side of Wellsway in this area. However, the narrowest pavement in this area runs on the **west side of Wellsway** north from Tesco to the Gore (i.e. the green space separating Wellsway and Bloomfield Road). This pavement is dangerously narrow and should be made safe. Alternatively, it could be removed altogether. It does not serve any

properties as all are accessed from Bloomfield Road. The space released could then be deployed for a wider pavement and landscaping/tree planting on the eastern side of Wellsway.

With pavement extensions and new crossings at junctions, we ask that quality **materials** are used and integrated with existing fabric. A standard engineering product might be at odds with the urban design required in a conservation area.

A further matter not covered that we ask to be considered is **rat running**. If the effect of the proposals is to slow northbound traffic further, then the known rat run east of Wellsway may be more used and cause more danger and disturbance to a residential area that also straddles routes to Beechen Cliff School. The rat run is via Devonshire Villas or Devonshire Buildings, Chaucer Road, Beechen Cliff Road and Hayes Place. Measures to discourage this rat run would be helpful. The route is less used as a rat run southbound, perhaps because rejoining the A367 is not as easy at the Devonshire end as it is at Hayes Place where the queue for the crossing and the yellow box aids the rejoin.

3 A367 Wellsway/Wells Road: Bear Flat Centre

From the Wellsway/Bloomfield Road junction north to the Hayesfield Park (south) junction

This area is **Bear Flat Centre**. It is therefore different from the stretches south of Bear Flat (see above) and north (see below). Wellsway at Bear Flat is designated as one of a limited number of retail and service centres in Bath (Policy CP12: Centres and Retailing of B&NES Local Plan). Any schemes to upgrade the A367 should be compatible with maintaining and enhancing the local centre. Wellsway here is not just a radial road south, but a place, the centre of a community and a destination.

It follows, we believe, that the WECA scheme at Bear Flat should be more than a transport engineering project. It should also be an urban design project in place making.

BFA in fact drew up its *Vision for Bear Flat Centre*, published in 2020.

<https://bearflat.org.uk/a-vision-for-bear-flat-centre/>

We welcome many of the proposals as meeting our Vision, but some aspects are disappointing so far.

We welcome proposals that accord with the BFA Vision:

- **Reduced space** for general traffic, with southbound and northbound **bus lanes**;
- **Footpath widening** on eastern side of Wellsway; and
- **Pedestrian priority** at Wellsway junctions with Bloomfield Avenue, Hayes Place, Bruton and Shakespeare Avenues; also Wells Road/Hayesfield Park.

But the proposals fall short of the Vision in three major aspects:

- No pedestrian crossing of **Bloomfield Road**;
- No **20mph speed limit**; and
- Very limited improvement to **public areas**.

Taking these in turn, on **Bloomfield Road** we understand a crossing may come soon near Bloomfield Green. Even if this does go ahead, there remains a strong case for a crossing of Bloomfield Road by the Gore on the approach to the Wellsway/Bloomfield Road junction. This is needed to complement the existing crossing of Wellsway on the opposite side of the Gore. It is a missing link in the route to Beechen Cliff School from the Bloomfield area and particularly the Linear Park and National Cycle Network (NCN). The proposals shown for this junction seem incomplete – if a fundamental aim is promoting walking, wheeling and cycling, then this junction should play its part.

The **Wellsway/Bloomfield Road** junction will be improved by the sharper right turn southbound that will moderate speed going into Bloomfield Road. We support that, and in addition advocate a change of surface for the whole junction (Wellsway and Bloomfield Road alongside the Gore, and a stretch of Wellsway north of the junction), such as a raised table.

We wish to see a **20-mph speed limit** through Bear Flat. This would make walking and cycling safer and pleasanter, would make better conditions for traders and their customers, and would probably smooth the flow of traffic with less stopping and starting. It should cover the whole of Bear Flat Centre. There is a case for a 20-mph limit from, say, Hatfield Road to the Churchill Bridge.

The **landscaping** shown so far is slight. It does not begin to make Bear Flat a place, not a route. Four planters will not have any significant impact on improving the environment of Wellsway. We'd like to see street trees on both sides of Wellsway, and, where possible green strips (e.g. shrubs) and benches etc. The proposed extension of the pavement on the east side will afford the perfect opportunity for planting away from the existing footpath. There is plenty of pavement area for planting on the west side of Wellsway. With trees, we'd emphasise the right species in the right place to obviate problems such as overhanging branches above the bus lanes or impaired visibility at junctions.

We wish to see a comprehensive plan for the **public realm**. The proposals need to be holistic, integrating measures such as tree planting, drainage, public realm improvements, and green infrastructure. If this stretches beyond the remit of the project, then we hope supplementary sources of funding could be explored. For one thing, BANES has been adept at winning funding for tree planting. It is great to see landscaping and tree planting proposed by WECA on Wellsway next to the proposed cycle way, and we ask that Bear Flat Centre receives at least the same attention.

While we welcome **footpath widening** on the eastern side of Wellsway, we ask that it continues south as far as Kipling Avenue. The widening on the east side of Wells Road below Bear Flat is more generous than that so far put forward for Bear Flat – yet Wells Road is not a Local Centre.

We keenly support the redesign of the **Wellsway/Hayes Place** junction. The radically wider pavements and a wide crossing will make this junction much safer and less intimidating for those of foot or on a bike or scooter. There is a strong desire line that runs from the east side of Wellsway to Holloway (and on to the city centre), with most people crossing at this point. One drawing has a dotted line on the west side of Hayes Place running away from the A367. We hope this is work in progress and that the scheme will go further to make Hayes Place safer by reallocating space from moving traffic to walking/cycling/drop-off/amenity. BFA has produced a scheme for Hayes Place, already shared with Nik Bowyer. The 'temporary' seating outside The Good Bear has been well received – any scheme should make this permanent.

We assume the two existing **yellow boxes** on Wellsway at Hayes Place and Bloomfield Road (not marked on plans) will be retained.

The existing **crossing** on Wellsway just north of Bloomfield Avenue is an important and heavily used facility. With the WECA changes, it might well be more heavily used by pedestrians and cyclists. It is on a major route to Beechen Cliff School. So we are keen for it to remain, but suggest that it be considered in relation to the **Bloomfield Avenue/Wellsway junction**, where safety has been a concern for some time. The WECA proposals currently do not improve this situation: northbound traffic turning left will have to cross the bus lane, southbound traffic turning right has to cross two lines of traffic while traffic turning right on to the A367 will have to cross two lanes of traffic northbound and merge into a third lane southbound. The crossing and the Bloomfield Avenue junction could be treated as one with a **light-controlled crossing** with phases for pedestrians and cyclists. BFA would oppose *additional* traffic lights. But *replacing* a crossing with traffic lights might make sense here.

BFA supports replacing the two southbound stops with a **single bus stop** that would have a new bus shelter with live bus time display. But we question the location of the rationalised stop. As shown, it would perpetuate the problem posed by the bus stop at that location whereby stationary buses seriously interfere with sight lines for traffic emerging from Shakespeare Avenue. We think the new southbound bus stop should be just south (not north) of Shakespeare Avenue.

We have sought a **drop-off bay** on the east side of Wellsway, near Kipling Avenue, that would be useful for Beechen Cliff School and for nearby traders. However, it might not be compatible with the bus lane proposed. Might it be possible to stop the bus lane a little north of Kipling Avenue in favour of a drop-off?

For the **Mobility Hub** outside The Bear, we will want to know more before commenting definitively. Exactly what will be provided and what will it look like? Can it be sited without affecting the view from and light into the northernmost window of The Bear? is there space for the hub, the bus shelter and passers-by?

As for Wellsway to the south of Bear Flat (see above), there is a need to clarify the issue of **cycle routes**. Two cycling desire lines converge northbound at Bear Flat: One from Wellsway and one from Bloomfield Road (connecting to the NCN via Bloomfield Green). Most cyclists then choose the Hayes Place/Holloway route to get to the city centre. Presumably cyclists will be allowed to use the bus lanes through Bear Flat; if so, it would be good for this to be explicit.

Deliveries to businesses need to be factored in to the scheme. In two cases, these impair sight lines and worsen congestion. First, lorries deliver daily to the **Coop** stopping on Wellsway between Bruton Avenue and Hayes Place, parking where the bus lane starts. Delivery to the rear of the store on Bruton Avenue would be impracticable for the size of vehicles currently used. Perhaps a loading bay needs to be provided on Wellsway here. At the least, the bollards envisaged should be re-examined. **Majestic** on the west side of Wellsway has deliveries from the highway, even though it has an off-road car park. Less problematic is the **Pharmacy** on Hayes Place/Wellsway that should have a dedicated space just north of the proposed extended paving/cycle parking.

With pavement extensions and new crossings at junctions, we ask that quality **materials** are used and integrated with existing fabric. A standard engineering product might be at odds with the urban design required in a conservation area.

Signage may be a matter reserved for a more detailed stage, but we put down a marker that there is an excess of signs through Bear Flat, some repeating others, some possibly redundant. Some rationalisation should be part of this project in due course.

4 A367 Wells Road, north of Bear Flat Centre

From the Wells Road/Hayesfield Park (south) junction north to the Wells Road/Hayesfield Park (north) junction

BFA supports the pedestrian priority at the Wells Road junctions with **Hayesfield Park** (north) and **Upper Oldfield Park**.

We support the **wider pavements** envisaged.

We support a possible new **crossing** on Wells Road between Hayesfield Park and Oldfield Road. If possible, we would like to see it shifted southward, better to complement the existing crossing to the north and to be closer to the desire line that runs from Holloway/Hayesfield Park (footpath) to Oldfield Road.

With pavement extensions and new crossings at junctions, we ask that quality **materials** are used and integrated with existing fabric. A standard engineering product might be at odds with the urban design required in a conservation area.

A matter not covered that we ask to be considered is **rat running**. If the effect of the proposals, especially a new crossing, is to slow southbound traffic further than the known rat run through Hayesfield Park may be more used and cause more danger and disturbance to a residential area. Measures to discourage this rat run would be helpful. The route is less used as a rat run northbound, because it involves two right turns and rejoining the A367 is not as easy at the northern end as it is at the southern where the likely queue for the crossing aids the rejoin.

Bear Flat Association

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planning@bearflat.org.uk

www.bearflat.org.uk