



**The Bear Flat
Association**

for those living and working in Bear Flat, Bath



Somer Valley Links

**This is the BFA response to the consultation
(Feb/March 2025)
concerning the proposals for the A367 at and
near Bear Flat**

Bear Flat Association (BFA)

www.bearflat.org.uk

If you have any queries or comments on our response, please contact us at :

planning@bearflat.org.uk



The Bear Flat Association

for those living and working in Bear Flat, Bath



1 Introduction

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

We took part in the 2021 and 2023 consultations.

We respond by geographical zones, 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

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 the changes to the **Hatfield Road** and **Greenway Lane** junctions, and the upgraded crossing on Wellsway just to the north.

We think there should be pedestrian priority across the junctions at **St Luke's Road** and **Devonshire Villas** (leading to Old Wells Road). The latter is likely to slow southbound traffic turning left from Wellsway (often speeding and dangerous now), making the junction safer.

The wider apron between **Devonshire Villas (mews)** and **Devonshire Villas** is positive and we agree this is suitable for cycle parking. The opportunity should be taken here to introduce substantial greenery (the landscaping shown is tiny).

We think there should be pedestrian priority across the junctions at **Devonshire Buildings**, and we support the wider pavements at this junction.

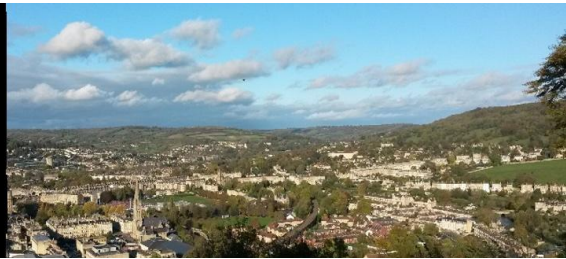
North from Devonshire Buildings, there are no drawings until Kipling Avenue, implying no changes proposed. However, we wish to see pedestrian priority at the Wellsway junctions with **Longfellow** and **Milton Avenues**.

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 Bear Flat Association

for those living and working in Bear Flat, Bath



3 A367 Wellsway/Wells Road: Bear Flat Centre

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

General considerations

Bear Flat is a **local centre**, designated as one of a limited number of retail and service centres in Bath (Policy CP12: Centres and Retailing of B&NES Local Plan). Bear Flat is also the focus and heart of a **community** with its icon of the Bear presiding over the centre, a flourishing local association in the BFA, a set of businesses keen to make the centre a success (for example partnering BFA in the first-ever Christmas lights in 2023, repeated in 2024) and social events organised by BFA and others often in the Hall on Bruton Avenue very close to Wellsway.

The A367 here is not just a radial road, but a place, the centre of a community and a destination. It follows, we believe, that this 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 proposals that accord with the **BFA Vision**: the bold footpath widening and reduced space for general traffic that will give Bear Flat a more civilised feel, safer and pleasanter for walking, shopping and meeting.

But the proposals fall short of the Vision in one major respect: no **20mph speed limit**. Without this, our support for the scheme would be questionable. *BFA considers that a 20-mph speed limit is pre-requisite to a successful local centre*. It would make walking and cycling safer, would make better conditions for traders and their customers, and would probably smooth the flow of traffic with less stopping and starting. In fact, we ask for a 20mph on the A367 from just south of Hatfield/Greenway to just south of Oldfield Road. There seems to be a notion that this would lengthen bus journeys. The delay of under a mile of road at 20 mph would be slight. Moreover, why should Bloomfield Road, Upper Bristol Road, London Road and others have 20 mph but not Bear Flat – none of those 20 mph zones is a designated local centre?

BFA is delighted that the Consultation asks what **'additional features'** could 'enhance the area'?

We propose a piece of **public art**, perhaps installed on the enlarged footway on the western side at the northern end of Wellsway (near the mobility hub, possibly close to or part of (or instead of) the play space. It might incorporate the words 'Bear Flat'. It would help portray the SVL scheme as a major public benefit of aesthetic and symbolic, not just utilitarian, value. An aim of mobility hubs, we note, is to 'provide a contribution to the social and community fabric'. We would be happy to discuss how this might be funded and commissioned.

We'd like to see street **trees** on both sides of Wellsway, and, where possible green strips of shrubs or low planting. Bear Flat has nowhere to sit outdoors in the public realm (though we do have businesses with outside seating) – the nearest bench being on Beechen Cliff Road. We'd favour **benches** on the east and west sides of Wellsway, associated if possible with landscaping giving some



The Bear Flat Association

for those living and working in Bear Flat, Bath



shelter from traffic noise and disturbance. Ideally, a landscape architect would advise on this important aspect. We'd encourage more focus on the development of a coherent landscaping plan using the wider pavements.

Resilience of the scheme warrants careful consideration. How well would the scheme cope with obstacles such as breakdowns? Currently emergency **blue-light vehicles** can negotiate their way through Bear Flat even when there is congestion – will a two-lane road allow for this?

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.

Road 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.

Detailed points

We welcome the **new crossing** in the pipeline at **Bloomfield Road** near the Wellsway junction (funded separately from SVL). We suggest this crossing is indicated on SVL plans. The new crossing will complement the **existing crossing** of Wellsway on the opposite side of the Gore. Oddly, the proposals ignore this crossing. Yet it needs upgrading for both safety and aesthetic reasons. It should be of the same standard as the new crossings already shown in the SVL scheme. It would be anomalous for this crossing to ask users to await/chance a gap in the traffic (since it is not light-controlled). We stress the importance of a safe pedestrian/cycle crossing at Bloomfield Road and Wellsway – notably part of the walking and cycling route from the Linear Park to Beechen Cliff School, and for local residents generally. The route is also used to get from the linear park to the city centre and the canal and river paths, continuing via Bear Flat and Holloway.

BFA supports the '**side road junction treatments** to improve pedestrian crossing' envisaged. We wish to see pedestrian priority at Wellsway junctions with Bloomfield Avenue, Hayes Place, plus Bruton, Shakespeare and Kipling Avenues. (See also Milton and Longfellow Avenues above).

We recognise the thought being given to safety at the **Wellsway/Bloomfield Road/Kipling Avenue** cross roads. The Kipling **left turn only** is part of this, but the benefits have to be weighed against the drawbacks. It would disrupt the informal one-way system that Beechen Cliff School recommends of up Shakespeare and down Kipling. It would also mean longer journeys and hence unnecessary traffic on alternative routes, most likely Shakespeare and Milton Avenues and Chaucer Road. If this measure goes ahead the school might wish to reverse the one-way routes, so up Kipling and down Shakespeare.

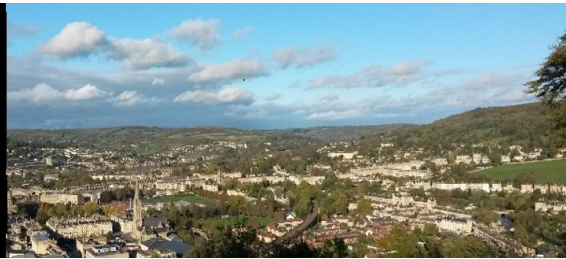
A northbound **bus lane** is supported in principle, but the amended bus lane between the bus gate and Bloomfield Avenue raises problems in practice:

- Wellsway residents (#24-32) are concerned about the loss of some four parking spaces without a reasonable alternative – the surviving spaces near the bus gate will be full most of



The Bear Flat Association

for those living and working in Bear Flat, Bath



the time, and they may not park in Bloomfield Avenue as it is in a different RPZ area, leaving only some distance up Bloomfield Road as their nearest available space;

- Two businesses (immediately south of Majestic) would lose their loading bay; and
- The widened footway by 26 Wellsway would cover a storm drain, and two drains on the east side of Wellsway would also be covered. There is a fear that a flood like that in 1999 might recur; indeed, it was the flood that led to the storm drains being installed.

BFA asks that these concerns are addressed. Were they to be unresolved, then the benefits of such a short stretch of bus lane with a give-way to general traffic at the end might well be outweighed.

We suggest that these options be explored:

- Tweaking the road layout such as slightly narrowing the median and perhaps slightly reducing the additional footway on the east side to allow more space for on-street parking on the west side and a loading bay at or near the two businesses mentioned. There might not be sufficient space released for this to work, and we want to retain most of the additional footway, but it is worth examining;
- Ending the bus lane near 28 Wellsway, perhaps with buses having priority at the merge, releasing space for parking, a loading bay and safer and easier access to Majestic/Cook; and
- Retaining the bus lane much as it is now, but with calming to alleviate the danger of the bus lane being used at excessive speed by drivers turning left into Bloomfield Avenue or (unlawfully) undertaking traffic and cutting in north of the crossing at The Bear.

We had sought (in the 2023 consultation) a **drop-off bay** on the east side of Wellsway, near Kipling Avenue, that would be useful for Beechen Cliff School. Might such now be possible as the idea of a bus lane here has been dropped, and the widened footway might accommodate a bay?

BFA supports replacing the two **southbound stops** with a single bus stop and are grateful that locating it just south of Shakespeare Avenue has been agreed. The option of moving the **northbound bus stop** from outside The Bear to outside Majestic/Cooks is put forward, but on balance we prefer that it remain as now. Relocated, it could cause problems for drivers from Shakespeare Avenue turning right on to Wellsway. It might also entice pedestrians (especially students coming down Kipling Avenue from the school) to jay walk rather than walk further to use the crossing and then walk back to the relocated stop. There's a logic to siting a bus stop close to a crossing and a mobility hub.

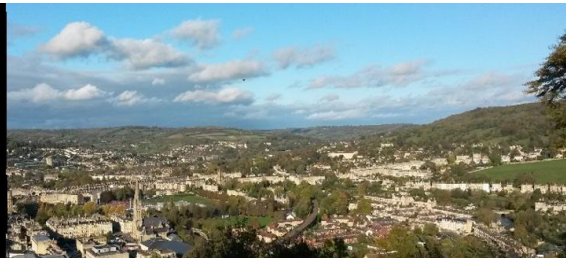
Safety has been a concern for some time at the **Bloomfield Avenue/Wellsway** junction. The proposals would improve this as northbound traffic turning left would no longer have to cross a bus lane, while southbound traffic turning right would no longer have to cross two lanes. Traffic emerging on to the A367 would have a simpler and narrower road to enter.

Regarding the altered **crossing** at The Bear Inn, the shorter distance for pedestrians should make the crossing safer. We'd favour retaining the current amount of time for people to walk across as some find insufficient time now (or at least not reducing the phase as much as the shorter distance might imply). There is also the incidental benefit for traffic at T-junctions who use the red traffic phase to join/cross traffic, reducing impulsive, frustrated bad driving.



The Bear Flat Association

for those living and working in Bear Flat, Bath



For the **Mobility Hub** outside The Bear, we will want to know more before commenting definitively. Exactly what it will look like is unclear (and it is not mentioned or shown on the Bear Flat technical drawing). We'd seek a separate consultation on this in due course. We would encourage the Council to ensure that their modelling assumptions on cycling volume are reasonable in the trade off of traffic speed and alternative modes of transport, and in assessing that the hub would be value for money.

Deliveries to businesses need to be factored in to the scheme. Long lorries deliver daily to the **Coop**, stopping on Wellsway between Bruton Avenue and Hayes Place. Delivery to the rear of the store on Bruton Avenue would be impracticable for the size of vehicles currently used. A loading bay is needed on Wellsway. At **Majestic/Cook** deliveries and customers accessing the off-road car park. need to be allowed for (the plans do not show the entrance and exit). The Cook lorry is too big to fit into the off-street parking area apparently and so has to park on the road - this needs to be considered in relation to the bus lane and possible relocation of the bus stop.

Accommodating deliveries would help with resilience (above). Retaining or adding lanes for traffic waiting to turn into side roads would also help. A further suggestion is to have **yellow boxes** to facilitate movement into and out of some side roads, especially Shakespear and Bruton Avenues.. Bloomfield Avenue currently has a 'Keep Clear' sign, but we suggest a yellow box would be clearer, (northbound drivers often don't see this and block the Bloomfield Avenue exit when the lights are red).

There is a strong pedestrian desire line that runs from the east side of Wellsway to Holloway (and on to the city centre), with most people crossing at the **Wellsway/Hayes Place** junction. We ask that the scheme go further to make Hayes Place as a whole safer by reallocating space from moving traffic to walking/cycling/drop-off/amenity. The least that should be done is a raised table and/or continuous footway at the southern end of Hayes Place.

We are pleased to find the existing **yellow box** and **right-turn lane** on Wellsway at Hayes Place are to be retained.

Incidentally, the Bear Flat plan labels the A367 as 'Wells Road'; this is incorrect as Wells Road runs north from Hayesfield Park.

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 seeks pedestrian priority across **Hayesfield Park** at the junction with Wells Road.

The junction of Wells Road and **Oldfield Road** appears set to remain much as now, perhaps because bus movements have to be facilitated. There might, however, be scope to tighten the geometry to slow vehicles turning left into Oldfield Road which is 20 mph – buses only turn right into that road.



The Bear Flat Association

for those living and working in Bear Flat, Bath



We support the principle of new **crossing** on Wells Road between Hayesfield Park and Oldfield Road, but where sited it would not relate well to Oldfield Road or the lane running from Holloway to Wells Road. Consideration might be given to shifting the crossing south and/or to combining it with a **light-controlled junction** with Oldfield Road.

The wider **footways** are welcome, especially where the current pavement is narrow, and at the **Upper Oldfield Park/Hayesfield Park** cross roads.

A matter to be considered is **rat running up Hayesfield Park**. The effect of the proposals, both a new crossing and a southbound bus stop with buses stopping in the running lane, is likely to slow southbound traffic more than today. Thus the known rat run through Hayesfield Park may be more used and cause more danger and disturbance to a residential area. The raised table at the northern end will help. But we consider that further measures to discourage this rat run are called for as part of SVL: it ought to seek to resolve a problem that it (unintentionally) makes worse. Having residents' only or access only is one possibility. A build out in the central part of Hayesfield Park with one-way working and northbound priority might help, and/or a continuous and raised footway connecting the lanes, or a combination of the two.

5 Meeting with BFA

We understand this to be the final SVL public consultation.

It was indicated to us at the Consultation on 5 March that further engagement with residents' associations might be possible. BFA would welcome this, perhaps when the recent feedback has been digested, but before final designs are drawn up? We note contact details below.

Contacts:

Timothy Cantell, Planning and Transport Convenor, Bear Flat Association

planning@bearflat.org.uk

and/or

David Morgan, Chair, Bear Flat Association

enquiries@bearflat.org.uk FAO David Morgan

Bear Flat Association

March 2025