

Review of the Rossiter Road and Widcombe Parade Scheme



Photo by Amanda Brown

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WIDCOMBE ASSOCIATION

ROSSITER ROAD REVIEW

SYNOPSIS

Generally, the Widcombe Association believes that the scheme has achieved its objectives. The quality of the environment within Widcombe Parade is significantly improved. It is noted that traffic movement on A36 is also much better. However, the Association believes that there are flaws in the scheme that raise concerns for both safety and environmental quality.

Safety

The principal safety concerns are at the White Hart Junction and the approach roads, especially the crossings at the bottom of Widcombe Hill and Prior Park Road. Drivers approach these two crossings too quickly and seem to be unaware of the need to proceed with caution. This is the most urgent issue to be addressed.

It is the Association's view that this is a failure of design that could be corrected. The crossings should be raised and not be flush with the road. The approach roads to the junction could be surfaced with a distinctly different colour, and consideration should be given to putting a refuge on the crossing of Widcombe Hill. In order to maintain the sense of restraint, the new surfacing should also be applied within the double roundabout.

There are safety concerns within the Parade. Again, the crossings should be raised to slow traffic down. There are safety issues with the cycle lane including uncertainty on definition and direction and conflict at the crossing with Millbrook Place.

Safety issues are also raised at the two major junctions on A36, due principally to the profusion of poles, traffic signals and lighting columns. The number of signs and signals cause confusion and, in some cases, obstruct each other. Rationalisation of these would enhance safety.

Environmental Quality

The principal environmental concerns are at the two main junctions on A36, where the numbers of poles, signs and signals are excessively intrusive visually, and wholly inappropriate within a World Heritage Site and a Conservation Area. The eastern junction is by far the worst of the two. Action should include reducing the number of signal heads, reducing the number and size of signs, and reducing the number of poles by using remaining poles for more than one purpose. The Council's approach on this scheme is in contravention of Government advice on signing and signalling within urban areas.

The Council's review of the scheme should be broader based than just a safety audit. It should include a full engineering and environmental assessment. As part of its statutory duty, the Council should monitor air quality in order to demonstrate the beneficial impact the scheme has had.

The Widcombe Association would welcome the opportunity to walk round the area with officers from the Council to consider with them how best the faults in the scheme can be rectified.

WIDCOMBE ASSOCIATION

ROSSITER ROAD REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This review has been conducted following the practical completion of the Rossiter Road scheme. It is submitted to the Bath and North East Somerset Council, to be considered as part of the Council's own review of the project.

Generally the Widcombe Association believes that the scheme has achieved its objectives. The quality of the environment within the Parade is significantly improved and that seems to be the view of most people. It is also noted that traffic movement on A36 is also greatly improved, especially the east to west movement. We expect this to be reflected in the Council's own review.

However the Association believes that there are flaws in the scheme that could or should be addressed. These are considered below under two broad categories : **safety** and **environmental quality**. Some additional issues are raised, and a defects list is included as an appendix. Recommendations on actions proposed by Widcombe Association are highlighted in bold italics.

SAFETY

Most of the concerns about the scheme expressed by residents concern safety. The issues raised below are a combination of the Association's own observations and issues raised by residents of Widcombe. We believe that there are safety issues caused by flaws in the design of the scheme and by excessive road signing and signalling that confuses both drivers and pedestrians.

It is clear that a principal objective of the Council was to improve traffic flow on A36, the main east-west route through Bath, and to ensure that removing through traffic from Widcombe Parade would not hinder that cross town route. Our comments on traffic flow are from observation. We have not conducted traffic counts or measured queueing or traffic delays.

Widcombe Parade

Traffic flows through the Parade have been greatly reduced. This was predicted by the modelling that was carried out as the design for the scheme was developed. Traffic speeds through the Parade are too high, especially at times when there is little traffic. This shows a weakness in the design of the street in that it does not impose on drivers a need to drive at appropriately low speeds.

The term "Widcombe courtesy street" is used on signs at the entrance to the Parade. The meaning of this is probably lost on most motorists. If the intention is to slow drivers down, then it should have been done through the design of the street. Within the Parade the road has been narrowed at the crossing points. However, the intention had been to raise the level of the crossings slightly above the level of the road so that motorists would have been more aware that there was a restraint on movement through the Parade. The imprinted crossings have been laid flush with the road surface, so that it reads as an uninterrupted surface. Although some motorists do slow and even stop for pedestrians, from observation, most just continue through the Parade at an even speed. The meaning of "courtesy" is lost.

It is understood that the crossings were laid flush with the carriageway surface to avoid damage to the edge of the raised surface. It is noted that the crossings in the centre of Keynsham on the approach to the main junction by the new Civic Centre are raised and are contemporary with the installation of those in Widcombe, so it is difficult to understand why the Widcombe crossings could not have been raised.

The Widcombe Association recommends that the crossings in the Parade are raised in order to make them more visible to drivers, and to ensure that drivers slow down as they approach.

At peak times there are queues when vehicles cannot exit the Parade as the junction by the White Hart is blocked by vehicles coming down Prior Park Road and Widcombe Hill. The queueing is quite short lived, and the queues dissipate quickly.

There is an issue at the eastern end of the Parade where the signals for the pedestrian crossing are interpreted by some drivers as controlling access to the junction. This has caused some drivers to drive into the junction without giving way to vehicles coming from the right. Also, some drivers may be unaware that the junction is a double roundabout. These are issues that should be considered as part of the overall review of the design of this junction and the approach roads. The Widcombe Association would favour solutions that avoid having to erect more traffic signs.

A problem has been reported within the Parade at the junction with Millbrook Place. One resident has indicated problems leaving Millbrook Place (turning right towards the White Hart junction) during peak times. The issue is both in joining the traffic in the Parade, and then getting to and negotiating the White Hart junction. The same resident has also reported a problem in re-entering Millbrook Place from the Parade due to lack of visibility, especially when another vehicle is leaving.

There is also a conflict between vehicles leaving Millbrook Place and cyclists on the cycle lane. Vehicles drive out to the Parade and cyclists tend to ride across the end of Millbrook Place without pausing. A number of near misses have been observed.

It is proposed that the paving for the footpath and cycle lane be continued straight across the entrance to Millbrook Place so that drivers are forced to stop before they cross. This would improve safety for both pedestrians and cyclists.

The Cycle lane / cycling

Although the cycle lane is largely within the Parade, it is dealt with separately because concerns with the design of the cycle lane are the second most common comment on the scheme. These are principally concerned with safety. The definition of the cycle lane is ambiguous because at both ends it is paved with Courtstone, whilst through the Parade it is block-paved. Small blocks with cycle symbols are currently being installed, but it remains to be seen if they are effective in dealing with the confusion at the western end, where the cycle lane is two-way between Lyncombe Hill and the crossing at the Ha'penny Bridge.



The cycle lane illustrating the confusion caused by the switch in materials.

It does raise the question of why the block paving was not carried through, or alternatively, why the Courtstone was not used throughout. We also query why a white line was used to delineate the cycle lane from the footpath in the section that is block paved. It is noted that a white line has not been used in the London Road scheme where there is a similar juxtaposition of paving and blocks denoting cycle lane and footpath.

The signing of the cycle lane is equally unclear, with signs in close proximity to each other giving apparently contradictory advice. Thus there is uncertainty for pedestrians as to whether or not they are on the cycle lane. It is also confusing to cyclists. It should be noted that cyclists are using the cycle lane in both directions throughout its length.



Confusing signs for the cycle lane. These signs are also poorly installed.

There is a need to clarify the definition of the cycle lane. Installing cycle symbols in the paved areas should help. The signing of the cycle route needs to be clear and unambiguous, and set at a height suitable for cyclists.

A number of cyclists using the cycle lane are travelling at excessive speeds. This is dangerous for pedestrians, especially those who cross the road and step straight onto the cycle lane between parked cars. It is also dangerous for drivers getting out of their cars straight onto the cycle lane.

The issue at the point where the cycle lane crosses Millbrook Place is raised above. There has been concern expressed by drivers entering or leaving Millbrook Place that they have had near misses with cyclists (coming in both directions).

It would be clearer if the cycle route was to be continued across the Millbrook Place junction (and possibly the pedestrian paving also) thus forcing drivers to stop and look before crossing the cycle lane / footpath.

Cycles (and motor cycles) have been observed using the lane between the Parade and the pay and display car park between the shops and the Baptist church as a short cut in a way that endangers pedestrians and people servicing the shops at the rear. The suggestion was made at one of the Steering Group meetings that overlapping barriers at either end of the lane would reduce the risk from cyclists riding too fast through the lane. Barriers would also deter motor cyclists.

The Association suggests that the Council considers the installation of overlapping barriers in this location.

The White Hart junction, Widcombe Hill and Prior Park Road

Most of the safety concerns about the Rossiter Road scheme are about the crossings at the foot of Prior Park Road and Widcombe Hill, and are related to the operation of the White Hart junction.

At most times the White Hart junction, the double mini-roundabout at the foot of Prior Park Road and Widcombe Hill, works well. At times of peak flow, vehicles coming down the two hills have precedence over those coming from the Parade. Problems do occur when traffic backs – up from the traffic signals at A36 along the lower Pulteney Road. The smooth operation of the junction requires drivers entering the junction from Widcombe Hill and Prior Park Road to hold back when the queue from A36 is formed, and not to enter the junction. This then allows vehicles from the Parade access to Widcombe Hill and Prior Park Road.

This does happen, and we suspect that drivers are becoming used to the informal management of traffic through the junction. We are aware that this issue could be alleviated by the use of a yellow box, but the Widcombe Association would strongly oppose this. We originally argued for an informal arrangement at this junction which would indicate more strongly to drivers that they should exercise greater levels of courtesy in making way for opposing vehicle movements.

Queues do form on Widcombe Hill and Prior Park Road during peak times. From observation the period over which the queues form is short (as little as 15 or 20 minutes) and the queues dissipate quickly once the traffic signals at the A36 junction release the vehicles on the lower Pulteney Road.



White Hart junction showing traffic queueing back from A36, and vehicles on Widcombe Hill stopped so as to enable vehicles from Widcombe Parade to turn right to either Prior Park Road or Widcombe Hill.



Evening peak hour queue on Widcombe Hill. On the evening this photo was taken, the queueing lasted for no more than 15 minutes.

The concerns raised by residents relate primarily to the dangers of pedestrians crossing the two roads. Drivers are approaching the junction too quickly and are unaware of the need to proceed cautiously as pedestrians may be crossing. The roads and double roundabout junction are laid-out as normal urban roads, encouraging drivers to pass along them at normal urban speeds. There is nothing in the design of these roads that indicates to drivers that these are “courtesy” streets” as indicated on the signs at the approaches.

The measures taken to slow vehicles down, especially as they approach the junction are inadequate. The warning “throats” formed by the impressed blocks are set flush with the road surface and give drivers no clear advanced warning that they should be taking extra care. A narrowing of the road widths at these points would also help to slow traffic. Prior Park Road is not such an issue as the road narrows below the garden centre and traffic is forced to travel at lower speeds. However, the extension of the 20MPH zone up the hill to a point above the junction with Perrymead would help to address problems of speed in that area.

The crossings at the bottom of Widcombe Hill and Prior Park Road are likewise difficult for drivers to see as they, too, are flush with the road surface. Their significance is not obvious.

The Widcombe Association did urge the Council to take a more radical approach to the design of this area. We accept that the concept of shared space may not be appropriate, but a design that imposes on drivers the need to pass through carefully and slowly is required. The current arrangements are unsafe and unacceptable.

The Widcombe Association believes that the junction in front of the White Hart and the three approach roads (from the two “throats” on Widcombe Hill and Prior Park Road and on the lower Pulteney Road) should be treated as a single coherent piece of design. The surface of the approach roads should be treated in a distinctively different colour (preferably a different material) and consideration should be given the treatment of the double roundabout, perhaps with the same material as the approach roads. The crossings, including that on the lower Pulteney Road, must be raised above the level of the road so that drivers are aware of the need to slow down. This might require a re-alignment of the crossing of Prior Park Road due to the presence of large surface water drains. The re-alignment might be more suited to the principal desire line. The two “throats” on Widcombe Hill and Prior Park Road should also be raised.

The Widcombe Association proposes that, given the width of Widcombe Hill at the crossing, consideration should be given to the installation of a refuge. This would narrow the road, and thus have the dual benefit of forcing drivers to slow and provide pedestrians with greater confidence in crossing. There is also scope to build out the kerb on the Parade / Prior Park corner to deter drivers from turning left into the Parade.

Finally, the Association believes that the implementation of the 20MPH zone on both Widcombe Hill and Prior Park Road is inadequate. . A greater awareness of the 20MPH limit on the roads leading to and from the White Hart junction would reinforce the message to drivers to proceed with care.

20 MPH repeater signs and road markings should be installed on Widcombe Hill, and on Prior Park Road the 20 MPH zone should be extended much further up the hill, to beyond the junctions with Church Lane and Perrymead. Again, repeater signs and road markings would be required.

The level of concern expressed by residents on this issue does indicate a need for action. The Association urges that this action is led by urban design principles, not conventional traffic management practice.

It is also suggest that the Council should examine the phasing of the traffic signals at the A36 junction (by the hotel). It may be that adjustment of the signal timings could help to reduce the queueing, especially during peak times.

A36 Rossiter Road / Pulteney Road

Traffic flow on A36 has improved significantly, especially the east to west movements. Pre-scheme, queues did form on most weekdays as far back as North Parade, and in peak periods, to Bathwick Hill. The queues that used to form along Pulteney Road eastwards from Widcombe Parade have been largely eliminated. This has to be regarded as a major benefit of the scheme.

It has been noted that in the peak hours traffic queues on the lower Pulteney Road from the eastern junction back to the White Hart junction. When it is released, there are occasions when the left turn is blocked by traffic queuing back from the western junction, so that the lower Pulteney Road does not clear.

It is suggested that the relative phasing of the two junctions on A36 is examined to find out if this problem can be eased.

A major flaw in the operation of the scheme is that drivers moving westwards along the Pulteney Road continue to ignore the new signage, and bear left towards the White Hart junction, expecting to drive through the Parade. Most realise their error and U-turn and travel back to the junction with Rossiter Road by the hotel. A few still drive through the Parade the “wrong” way.

It is suspected that some drivers are following sat-navs. These will take some time to be up-dated, but it is believed that the design of the junction contributes to this behaviour. It is noted that the Council has acknowledged this by applying a coloured surface to try and distinguish the principal road (A36) from the road into Widcombe. However, the coloured road surface is barely noticeable to drivers and vehicles use the approach to the lower Pulteney Road as a slip-road. There is still too little physical distinction between the two roads, and it is likely that drivers read the road as it was pre-scheme. The current configuration therefore encourages drivers to leave A36 at too high a speed as they enter the “courtesy” street and approach the crossing by St Matthews Place.

In the interests of safety, there needs to be greater distinction between the main road (A36) and the subsidiary road (lower Pulteney Road). This could best be done by making the left turn into lower Pulteney Road more obviously a turn from a major to a minor road. One way would be to introduce a more clearly defined entrance to the lower Pulteney Road by building a new kerb line to replace the coloured surface. This would also increase safety for pedestrians at the crossing to and from St. Matthews Place



Junction of A36 and the lower Pulteney Road showing the painted road surface to indicate the access to Widcombe.

Signs and signals

The numbers of signs and signal heads at the two principal junctions on A36 is confusing to road users, and drivers in particular and is a safety issue. So, too, is the number of poles carrying the street lights, traffic signs and traffic signals.



Junction of Pulteney Road and Rossiter Road (the Eastern junction) showing the multiplicity of poles for traffic signals, signs and street lights.

The positioning of the signs, signals and lighting columns appear to have been carried out with insufficient co-ordination between those responsible. The result is that, in places, they interfere with each other. The result is confusing to road users and introduces potential hazard.

Steps can be taken to reduce the numbers of poles by the dual use of lamp posts, by the locating of more than one signal head per pole, and by the removal of signs and signals that are unnecessary.

The Council is not obliged to install three signal heads at each signal controlled point, especially on those roads that are single carriageway. In some instances the secondary signal is hidden by one in front of it.

Given the number of pedestrian crossings, the scheme could have been simplified by the use of Pelican rather than Puffin crossings. This would have resulted in fewer signal heads and control columns. For many users, they are safer. There are mechanical indicators on the pedestrian signal control boxes to let blind people know when it is safe to cross, but no audible warnings to inform them when the lights are with them as they cross.

It is accepted practice to make dual use of lighting columns to take signal heads. Wiring systems can be installed that do not compromise the functioning of either system. Dual use in this project would reduce the number of poles and enable signs that are hidden to be seen.

Examples of problems caused by the overprovision of signs, signals and poles.

Left turn into Rossiter Road at the eastern junction

- a) The two 30MPH signs are difficult to read. The left hand one is too far into Rossiter Road, on too tall a column and is obscured by a tree. The right hand 30 MPH sign is totally obscured by the signal head and lighting column in front of it,
- b) One signal head on the right hand side could be attached to the lighting column, the secondary could be positioned on the north side of Rossiter Road on the signal column on the traffic island. The junction does not need three signal heads.

Right turn into Rossiter Road at the eastern junction

- a) 30 MPH sign obscured by the signal head in front of it,
- b) Right hand secondary could be located on the lighting column on the north side of Pulteney Road,
- c) The first right hand signals could be replaced by a control post.
- d) The junction does not need three signal heads.



Traffic signals at the eastern junction obscuring 30MPH signs

Western junction on A36

Generally we believe that this junction works well. The issues we have noted relate principally to traffic signal timings. On the crossing by No.8 Widcombe Parade, there is a significantly long red to pedestrians. The length of delay for pedestrians induces people to cross in gaps between vehicles.

This delay also affects right turning traffic coming from the Churchill Bridge. It is excessive, and at peak times, results in traffic queueing back towards the Churchill roundabout.

Frustration for these drivers can be increased by the pedestrian crossing from the Ha'penny bridge. The signals controlling this crossing are independent of those controlling the crossing immediately to the east. Frequently, vehicles queueing to turn right, having waited for the signals at the right turn into the Parade to turn green, are prevented from moving by the signals at the Ha'penny bridge crossing.

As with the eastern junction, there are too many signal heads. This is both a safety issue and an unnecessary level of visual intrusion. Also, the two signals at the right turn from Rossiter Road into the Parade are set too high on their poles. Cars at the head of the queue, waiting to turn, have difficulty seeing the lights.

The final issue with signing at this junction concerns the lack of awareness of the 20MPH through the Parade from the right turn at Rossiter Road. The 20MPH signs are set wide apart due to the configuration of the junction and are difficult to read. Whilst it runs counter to our objective to remove signs, in the interests of safety, we believe that a 20MPH road marking could be added between the two upright signs.

Travelling westwards – left turn into Widcombe Parade;

- a) Control post on left hand not required,
- b) On left hand – put signal head on lighting column,
- c) Do not need three signal heads,
- d) Could locate secondary signal head on signal post on island in front of ramp,

Travelling eastwards;

First crossing from south side (Spring Gardens Road)

- a) Control post on left hand not required.
- b) Secondary signal could be located on the signal post on the island by the ramp.
- c) Only two signal heads required,

Second crossing from south side (river side of Rossiter Road)

- a) Only two signal heads required,
- b) Control post on north side not required.

It is recommended that the Council reviews the excessive level of signalling and road signing at the two principal junction on A36 in order to reduce confusion and improve safety for road users. This will require reduction of conflict between signs, signals and lighting columns. The Council is also

asked to examine the height of the traffic signals at the right turn from Rossiter Road, and to improve the 20MPH signing at the approach to the Parade from the west.

The Council is requested to examine the signal timing at the western junction, especially for the right turn from Rossiter Road to Widcombe Parade. This is linked, too, to the excessive delays at the pedestrian crossing by NO. 8 Widcombe Parade. It is requested that the Council re-examines the option of linking the Ha'penny Bridge crossing signals with the others at this junction.

The Widcombe Association would welcome the opportunity to walk round the area with officers from the Council and consider with them how best the signing and signalling could be rationalised.

ENVIRONMENT

The Rossiter Road project was promoted by the Widcombe Association as an environmental improvement project. The Community campaigned for the removal of through traffic from the Georgian shopping parade in order to gain a significant improvement in the quality of the environment. This has been achieved to a large extent. The noise, vibration and danger from heavy traffic has been largely eliminated. Air quality within the Parade was very poor, well below legally acceptable standards. Intuitively, the removal of most of the traffic must have had a beneficial effect on air quality. This will be of great benefit to all those who use the street, including those who live in it.

It is strongly recommended that when the Council reviews the scheme, the scope of the review incorporatess environmental criteria including air quality and visual impact.

Air quality

The Council has a statutory duty to address the issue of poor air quality. It has been known for some time that air quality along A36 does not meet acceptable standards, and that this is due in large part to pollution from traffic. One of the monitoring points is adjacent to Widcombe Primary School. In the past, measurements have also been taken in the Parade. As stated above, the removal of most of the through traffic from the Parade should have resulted in a significant improvement in air quality. It would be of benefit to the Council, in reviewing the scheme, to be able to demonstrate this as a positive outcome.

It is apparent that traffic flow along A36, especially the east to west movement, is greatly improved. There is far less traffic congestion. This should have led, too, to an improvement in air quality along the Pulteney Road. Given the high levels of air pollution at the monitoring point by the primary school, it would be of benefit to measure air quality at this point, post-scheme.

It is strongly recommended that the Council takes measurements of air quality within the Parade and at the monitoring point in Pulteney Road by the Widcombe Primary School.

Visual impact

There is no doubt that the scheme has significantly improved Widcombe Parade and its environs visually. The Widcombe Association believes, however, that some of the actions taken by the Council have detracted from the level of quality that could have been achieved. Much of this is due to the overprovision of signing and signalling, or the poor implementation of signing.

As mentioned above, the Widcombe Association would welcome the opportunity to walk round the area with officers from the Council and consider with them how best the signing and signalling could be rationalised.

Below are examples of poor or excessive signing and signalling. There is, of course, an overlap between these comments and those on safety in relation to signing and signalling.

The Widcombe Association has had concerns over the signing and signalling for the Rossiter Road scheme ever since the first installations were made at the eastern junction. We have carried out a review and our findings are set out below.

Sign poles

As a matter of principle, signs should be mounted on poles of appropriate height. Where there is an excessive length of pole above the sign, the pole should be shortened.



Showing the poor installation of signs, where the poles should not extend above the signs.



Showing the poor installation of signs, where the poles should not extend above the signs.

West junction on A36

A36 west bound approaching junction

- a) The traffic signal on the left hand (located on traffic island) could be mounted on the lighting column,

West bound entrance to lower Pulteney Road

- a) Crossing does not need three signal heads.
- b) Remove one signal head on right hand side, replace with a control post,
- c) Remove No-Entry signs. They are unnecessary as no one is likely to drive straight on given the road configuration. If they do have to be kept, use smaller signs.

Widcombe Parade (from east to west)

- a) The control post at the signal crossing could be smaller with a combined button and display.



Clumsy and intrusive control column within the Parade

- b) The direction sign (white arrow on blue background) opposite Millbrook Place, situated in the centre of the pavement on the north side is excessive. It is lit and has a control box also situated in the paving. Does it have to be lit when there is good street lighting? Does

it have to be situated in the middle of the footpath where it is a hazard to blind or partially sighted people?

- d) Cycling signs situated in the grass bank at the western end of the Parade. Their meaning is confusing. One indicates a shared cycle and pedestrian area, the one in front of it indicates the end of the cycle route, and a third pole has been positioned closer to Lyncombe Hill. Presumably these signs are to sort out the confusion on the cycle route at this end of the Parade. It is a design problem and should not be solved by planting signs.
- e) If cycling signs are required, they could be more discreet. The use of low level hoop signs in this location would be more appropriate. Also we were told that there would be cycle symbols set into the surface of the cycle track. They have not been installed.
- f) Why has "BUS STOP" been painted in the road? It seems to be an unnecessary sign as no vehicles can pass a stationary bus, and the road is too narrow to park at this point without blocking the road.

Foot of Lyncombe Hill

- a) The crossings of Claverton Street and Rossiter Road via the new ramp. Both crossings have three signals. As each road is one-way, only two signal heads are required at each crossing.
- b) The reduction in signs at the bottom of Lyncombe Hill is welcome, however, more thought could have been given to the way the remaining ones are displayed.
- c) The three large signs with yellow backing boards are unnecessary and inappropriate in a conservation area. Also the back of one of them is fully exposed to those going downhill. The sizes of the individual signs on these boards could be reduced, as they have been on the signs on Pulteney Road where it leaves Rossiter Road at the eastern junction.



Excessively intrusive signing at the foot of Lyncombe Hill.

d). The 20MPH sign into St Marks Road is unnecessary. It is clearly within the 20MPH zone, and the configuration of the road makes it virtually impossible to exceed 20MPH in any case.



Poor signing at the entrance to St Marks Road. The 20MPH sign is unnecessary as the road is clearly within the 20MPH zone. If a 20MPH repeater sign is considered appropriate, it could be put on the lighting column.

e) The sign indicating end of cycle route could be put on the adjacent lamp post and that post removed. (see photo on previous page)

Rossiter Road

- a) The appropriateness of the sign, located just before the left turn into the Parade from Rossiter Road, is queried. It is a very large sign for the nature of the message that it conveys. The route to Combe Down via Prior Park Road from the east has already been signed from A36 via the lower Pulteney Road. We suggest that this sign is unnecessary and should be removed. It encourages additional traffic through the Parade and is disproportionately large and unsightly.



Large and unnecessary sign on Rossiter Road

Summary of signing and signalling issues and visual impact

Many of the issues arising from the review of signing and signalling are the result of the careless or thoughtless use and positioning of signs, and an unwillingness to accept best practice within sensitive urban areas as advocated by Government.

In making the argument, yet again, that the minimum necessary signalling and signing should be installed consistent with road safety, the Council needs to be reminded of the advice given in Manual for Streets 2 which is endorsed by the Department of Transport.

On traffic signals, it states that *“Detailed guidance (on traffic signal control) is given in TD 50/04 (DMRB), but this is written specifically for trunk roads, and where used in other situations, should not be applied uncritically.”* The advice continues *“Traffic signals add to street clutter, particularly layouts that require large numbers of signal heads.... they can therefore have a severe visual impact.”* It is also clear, especially at the eastern junction, that the some of the signal heads totally obscure other road signs.

On road signs, Manual for Streets 2 states *“traffic signs and markings add significantly to the amount of street furniture and it is important that highway authorities look for opportunities to reduce excessive signing.”* The manual says that *“when new highways are built or improvements are carried out, designers may over-provide and over specify traffic signs, markings and other street furniture... this practice adds unnecessarily to street clutter and should be avoided. Instead, the starting point should be that they are not provided unless there is a clear need for them. Where there is doubt... they should be omitted and the situation monitored closely to establish whether they are justified in the light of experience.”*

At the eastern junction the number of poles could be reduced by at least 6. The number of signals could be reduced by having two rather than three heads at each junction, and /or some of the signals could be located on other poles (lighting columns or other signal poles). At the western junction, including the crossing by the ramp, the number of poles could be reduced by 6 by reducing the number of signal heads or moving them to other poles, and by removing two of the control posts.

In other parts of the scheme, there are signs that are either unnecessary or inappropriate, and should be removed or changed. The existing signs at the foot of Lyncombe Hill are excessive in number and size, and the re-modelling of the junction provides the opportunity to remove and / or change them to ones that are less intrusive.

Additional issues

The open area at the western end of the Parade

The area at the western end was not subject to a detailed urban design – the layout of the area has been ad hoc. A conceptual plan was produced pre-contract, but the implementation of the area is not consistent with it. The specimen tree is not in the position indicated on the original plan, nor as indicated on the plan supplied by the Council following the installation of the tree. The various components are randomly positioned and very little thought has been given to the overall design. No detailed design drawings were shown to the Widcombe Association until October 2015 on a drawing showing the proposed planting. Even that drawing showed the specimen tree at the opposite end of the area.



The western end of the Parade indicating the random positioning of the tree and the signal control box.

The open area at the western end should have been self- draining, but ERH were not instructed to break up the concrete sub-base. This runs counter to the Council's insistence with applications for planning consent, that applicants install surfaces that are capable of self- drainage (sustainable

drainage). It is galling that the Council did not follow its own policy in forming this area. It should be noted that the WA was told originally that the area would be self-draining.

Any further changes to this area should be discussed with the Community before they are implemented. Generally, urban designers must be included within the team throughout the design and implementation stages of projects such as this.

Cycling stands

There is a need for additional cycle racks within the Parade. Evidence of this is the use of the bench at the eastern end for cycle parking, and a number of residents have commented on the lack of cycle storage. One hoop was to be located in the vicinity of My Shop (formerly Morrisons), but was positioned by the student housing on Pulteney Road.

It is proposed that two or three cycle hoops be located adjacent to the My-shop. It is also proposed that two or three hoops are located in the Parade east of the bench by the bus stop at the eastern end of the Parade, just beyond the florists.

Parking and servicing

The need for parking to support the businesses along the Parade has been a consistent theme during both the design and construction stages of the project. Limited concessions have been made to meet the demands of the traders. Thus the one of the bays within the Parade that had been allocated for servicing vehicles has been available for general parking.

This does exacerbate the problems for servicing vehicles, and it is noted that many of them stop on double yellow lines, in the main carriageway, and in some cases, on the footpath/cycle lane despite the presence of bollards.

There is an issue with the servicing bay in the middle of the Parade (adjacent to the shop Flamingo). Two signs denoting the loading bay have been erected but they are ambiguous both in terms of the conditions of use of the bay, and also in defining the location to which they apply (see photo below).



Ambiguous signs indicating parking restrictions in the loading bay in Widcombe Parade.

The number of general parking spaces will be increased by the return of the general parking spaces at the bottom of Widcombe Hill, once the construction of the Social Club has been completed.

One way to increase the availability of parking is to ensure turnover of spaces by having better monitoring by traffic wardens. The Association had been assured that there would be an intensive period of patrolling to ensure that motorists obeyed the time limits for parking. In the event, this was not apparent. It is clear that there is significant abuse of the parking regime.

The Council is urged to consider how additional parking to support the businesses in the Parade could be identified as part of the long awaited parking review.

On Pulteney Road south side a dropped kerb has been provided by the rear yard to the new development with a semi-formed parking bay by the yard. It encourages parking on the pavement (observed on several occasions) as the semi-formed bay is not wide enough for a parked vehicle.



Dropped kerb in Pulteney Road, but no proper parking bay.

The Council is requested to replace the dropped kerb by a standard height kerb in order to deter parking at this location.

Courtesy signs

The courtesy signs erected at the entrances to the Parade are ineffective. They are too small and unlikely to convey the message to drivers that they are approaching a special area where extra care should be taken.

The Association recommends that the “courtesy” signs are replaced with non-standard signs that announce the entrance to Widcombe, and that they are designed to make more impact on drivers as they approach the Parade. The Widcombe Association would be willing to be involved in the selection of an appropriate sign that could be located at each of the principal approaches to the Parade.

Summary

This report is submitted to the Council with the expectation that it will be used as input to the Council’s own review of the scheme. The Widcombe Association greatly appreciates the work of Members and Officers who have contributed to the implementation of the project. The Association regards the scheme as a success, but has highlighted issues that it believes need to be addressed in

order to make the area both safer and more environmentally acceptable. It is not clear how comprehensive the Council's review will be. The Association has been told that a standard safety audit will be carried out. **However, the Association hopes that the review will be more wide ranging and will make a full engineering and environmental assessment of the scheme, and that it will draw comparisons with the situation pre-scheme.**

Widcombe Association

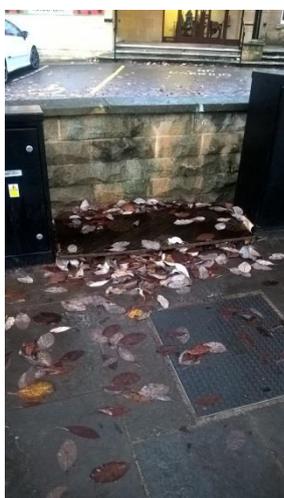
2nd December 2015

APPENDIX

DEFECTS LIST

A snagging list was prepared and handed to the Council prior to the end of the contract. A number of the problems identified in that list have been rectified. The following defects have been noted post-completion of the contract that remain to be rectified.

1. Paving generally – not well laid. Edges proud.
2. Pulteney Road north side just before canal bridge – unfinished footpath.
3. Pulteney Road north side – broken paving slabs by Baptist car park (by shop window).
4. In front of Baptist Church. Hole for a possible future signal control box covered by a wooden board.



Position for a possible future signal control box with temporary cover.

5. Pulteney Road north side by Baptist car park / lamp post – broken paving and kerb stone.
6. Paving in front of My-shop – slight damage.
7. Ramp to Widcombe Hill by My-shop too steep, damaged kerbs. It is a hazard for the elderly.
8. Pavement west side, bottom of Widcombe Hill – standard concrete slabs badly cracked – why not use Courtstone paving to match opposite side. These were laid as part of the contract to provide for potential future cabling. (nb. paving slabs opposite new social club are also badly damaged, but are not part of RR contract).
9. In front of White Hart – quality of Pennant paving unacceptable,
10. Outside White Hart – dimpled paving onto Prior Park road – broken / cracked,
11. Outside White Hart – setts poorly laid, also breaking-up,
12. Prior Park Road – pavements both sides in tarmac – surely paving could be taken round the corner especially on the western side. We had understood, from previous discussions on this issue, that this would be done.
13. Widcombe Parade north side by central crossing. Hole in pavement.
14. 2A, Prior Park road. Concerns at potential for water ingress following re-surfacing of footpath.
15. During times of heavy rain, parts of the road through the Parade flood. This is especially apparent on the northern side at the eastern end, in the vicinity of the bus stop. It appears to be

caused by poor alignment of the gutter that prevents water flowing towards the culverts.
Ponding is also apparent on the paving on the south side by the central crossing.

16. Slots for Bath in Bloom posts unusable.
17. Hand rail on ramp. It is rough at the joints between the various sections of pipe and should be painted black.
18. Small green space adjacent to No.8 Widcombe Parade. The gate in the wall to the rear of No.8 belongs to the Council, but is leased to the Kitchen Shop as access from their car park. It is being used by people generally as a way through from the rear of the shops to the crossing of Rossiter Road. A track has been worn across the recently grassed area. Either this needs to be stopped, or it needs to be regularised and a proper path installed. The Widcombe Association did request that this area be planted with shrubs rather than grass (in addition to the tree that has still to be planted).
19. Pole supporting sign indicating parking limits, situated on the open area at the western end by the loading bay has been hit, and needs to be straightened.
20. Setts in layby at western end of the Parade poorly laid.



Setts at western end of the Parade