



# The Widcombe Association

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Liveable Neighbourhood Consultation,  
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10<sup>th</sup> October, 2020

This letter is submitted on behalf of the Widcombe Association in response to the consultation on the Council's Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy.

The Widcombe Association has considered carefully the three reports that make up the Council's Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy. We fully support the aims of the strategy and have already made suggestions to our Ward members for the application of the Low Traffic Neighbourhoods policy to Widcombe. They, in turn, have prepared an overview, setting out the opportunities for implementing the LTN policy across the Widcombe and Lyncombe Ward.

In 2018, at the request of the Council, the Widcombe Association conducted a survey of five streets outside the current Residents Parking Zone (Zone 3), aimed at demonstrating the need for the further expansion of the Residents' Parking Zone in this area. There was firm support from these residents for a Resident's Parking Zone extending beyond the existing one. It had been anticipated, based on assurances from the Council, that the implementation of this expansion would follow the establishment of the Residents' Parking Zone in Bear Flat. To date, this has not happened.

In order to encourage the response to the Council's current consultation we have contacted all members of the Widcombe Association and asked them to respond individually. Some have also commented to us as well. Generally, the response has been favourable, though some concern has been expressed about experiences in parts of London where traffic displacement has become a real issue.

## **Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTN's)**

It is disappointing that the Jacobs' report does little more than set out the principles for Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and the types of measures that would be suitable for Bath and North East Somerset. We believe there are three locations within the Widcombe and Lyncombe Ward which extends beyond the reach of the Widcombe Association, where LTN measures would be appropriate. These are Greenway Lane / Lyncombe Hill, Church Street and Widcombe Hill. Proposals are in hand to address issues on Rosemount Lane and Forefield Rise.

These three suggestions all respond to known problems. Greenway Lane is used as a way of avoiding congestion on Wellsway, putting extra pressure on Lyncombe Hill, Rosemount Lane and Forefield Rise. External traffic through Church Street has long been contentious, especially at the eastern end where it is particularly narrow. In theory the road is restricted to access only, but this is rarely enforced. Widcombe Hill links the centre of the city to the university. Restrictions on Widcombe Hill would be justified on the need to improve safety where the road bends by Macaulay Buildings. The main issues on this route are the sharp bend by Macaulay Buildings and the narrowness of the road from Widcombe Crescent down to the junction by the White Hart. The bend by Macaulay Buildings has been the cause of accidents involving cyclists coming down the hill, resulting in a number of deaths. The LTN initiative provides the opportunity to fundamentally rethink the role and layout of this route.

Two other locations provide the opportunity for vehicles to bypass the principal traffic routes. Lyncombe Vale and Lyncombe Vale Road merit consideration as these roads offer the opportunity for rat running and could see further increases in traffic resulting from adjacent LTN measures. It would be important to monitor the displacement effects of the nearby LTN schemes on these roads. Another route that should be monitored as schemes are introduced is Abbey View / Horseshoe Walk that links Bathwick Hill both to the A36 Pulteney Road, and the centre of Widcombe via Widcombe Hill.

Outside the Widcombe Association Area, but within the Ward, Entry Hill has been identified as a potential LTN which the Widcombe Association would support, and which would bring indirect benefits to Widcombe. Entry Hill might receive a boost due to the allocation of resources from WECA to restrict vehicles and form a cycling route which would, in effect, be implementing a Low Traffic Neighbourhood.

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Jacobs' reports also set out the process for establishing Low Traffic Neighbourhoods. The onus would be put on individual communities to request LTN's, but the obligations are onerous in terms of the information and the level of justification that would be required to be compiled by them. The subsequent steps by the Council would be lengthy. To go through this process for each LTN proposal would, we suggest, take years. It is essential if the Council is to make progress with LTN's, that the processes are streamlined to enable their early implementation. We suggest that a more pragmatic approach is adopted. Certainly, in Widcombe, where the problem areas are well known, and proposals could be brought forward using Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders (as may well be the case for Entry Hill).

One of the issues raised in LTN's elsewhere is traffic displacement, whereby vehicles prevented from taking a preferred route through residential areas are made to use the principal road network. In most towns and cities, the principal roads themselves are also residential. This is certainly so in Bath. These roads are already carrying heavy traffic flows and are in breach of air quality standards, hence the proposed Clean Air Zone. Diverting more vehicles to them could run counter to the Council's obligations to improve air quality along them. It would be totally contrary to the Council's Air Quality strategy, if at the same time as air pollution is being lowered through the introduction of the Clean Air Zone, another policy was adding traffic back to those routes. As an example the A36, one of the principal roads in Bath, passes through Widcombe. Along Pulteney Road there are residential properties on both sides, and also the Widcombe Junior School which is immediately adjacent to it. Historically air pollution levels by the school have been well in excess of national standards. This will be addressed by the introduction of the Clean Air Zone. However, the A36 is likely to be the recipient of traffic displaced by the introduction of LTN's which could prejudice the gains made through the CAZ.

It does appear that when LTN's are introduced more local trips are made by cycle or on foot, with a corresponding reduction in vehicles. However, the implication must be that to address the potential increase on the principal roads parallel measures to reduce the overall levels of traffic must be pursued. As well as promoting cycling and walking, public transport must be strengthened and parking spaces, especially in the city centre, must be reduced. This would all be consistent with the Council's transport strategy. It is also imperative to increase the opportunities for pedestrians to cross the principal roads, especially where there is adjacent housing. This both helps to calm the traffic and improve safety in what are residential areas.

Monitoring traffic for each LTN scheme, both before and after implementation, will be crucial. Starting with schemes such as Entry Hill would enable the Council to understand driver behaviour in Bath, and would aid the justification and implementation of subsequent projects.

### **Residents Parking Zones**

We agree that a more strategic approach should be taken to Residents Parking Zones, and their compatibility to Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and the Clean Air Zone must be clear. However, the RPZ policy is already in place and is generally accepted. We believe that the current proposal for the extension of the RPZ within the Widcombe and Lyncombe Ward should proceed in order to meet the additional challenges resulting from the recently implemented Bear Flat Residents Parking Zone and the forthcoming Clean Air Zone. Its early implementation is unlikely to compromise a more general review of Residents Parking Zones across the city.

### **Electric Vehicle Charging**

We fully support the Council in developing a strategy for the provision of electric vehicle charging points. It is important for people to be able to charge their EV car batteries close to home, either through communal charging points or from the house. The latter is complicated by the large numbers of houses in Bath that have no off-road parking. It is noted that the Oxford trials included the option for home charging with slots in the pavements to allow cables to be trailed safely to a car parked in the road. If this approach was to be adopted in Bath, it would require drivers to be able to park outside their homes. This would have implications for parking policy.

### **Summary**

In summary the Widcombe Association supports the principles behind the Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy. There are opportunities within Widcombe to introduce Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, and all of these would be in response to known problems. We endorse the development and expansion of Residents' Parking Zones and would wish to see the proposals to expand the RPZ in Widcombe to include Greenway Lane, Lyncombe Vale and Lyncombe Vale Road, and Perrymead given priority. The provision of charging points for electric vehicles probably has a longer time horizon than the other measures, but we were dismayed to learn at the Council's webinar (7/10/20) that the use of lighting columns and the provision of protected cables across footpaths from individual dwellings have been ruled out as part of the strategy to provide charging points.



Jeremy Boss, Chair Widcombe Association

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