

*SUSTAINABLE  
WIDCOMBE*

*A report for the 'Improving Widcombe' project, April 2016*

# Sustainable Widcombe

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## Foreword from Dr David Goode

*“Think globally, act locally* has been the rallying cry of environmental campaigners for nearly fifty years, and was adopted by the United Nations at its Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 when every country was encouraged to produce local action plans for sustainability.

Since then we have seen extraordinary progress in developing sustainable solutions for urban life in many parts of the world. But rarely have the concepts been applied at the truly local level, as they have here in Widcombe, and that is what makes this document so significant.

*Sustainable Widcombe* is based on an analysis of people’s everyday needs and how these can be met most effectively through sustainable solutions. These needs cover all aspects of our lives, from food, homes, health, and education, to the wider issues of cultural activities and environment. The fact that Widcombe is only one small part of the city of Bath influences the kinds of changes that are suggested. In many ways we benefit from our close proximity to the city centre. But equally there are changes that we can make in our lifestyle within Widcombe that will contribute substantially to sustainability.

Quality of life is not easy to assess, but I frequently hear people who live in Widcombe saying that they value the landscape of woods, meadows, river and canal that bring a very special character to this part of Bath. But our social landscape is just as important. I would like to pay tribute to all those involved in this exploration of “uncharted territory” and particularly to Ian Gilchrist for driving the project forward. If this document can help our community to create a truly sustainable example of urban living then it will have achieved something very special. “

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David Goode is an ecologist and author living in Widcombe who has an international reputation for work on urban ecology, including the development of sustainable solutions for city living. He was Head of Environment at the Greater London Authority and has been a Visiting Professor at University College London since 1994. The natural history of Bath forms the introduction to his recent book *Nature in Towns and Cities* (Collins).

## The members of the Sustainable Widcombe team have been:

Cllr Ian Gilchrist  
Stewart Owen  
Tim Williamson (for Energy Efficient Widcombe)  
Marie Youngman

## INTRODUCTION and SUMMARY OF PROCESS

This report has been prepared by the 'Sustainable Widcombe' group as part of the Improving Widcombe initiative that was started in about January 2015 under the aegis of the Widcombe Association. The purpose of the efforts under this work has been to come up with actionable suggestions for making Widcombe more sustainable. These are offered back to the Improving Widcombe project to take up or not as they see fit.

**If you are only interested to see this set of suggestions in summary form they can be found next, on pages 4-5.**

Since this is as far as we know uncharted territory, we started with trying to define what we mean by sustainable in the context of a suburb (Widcombe) of a larger city (Bath), and then the process we chose to adopt was to first define a set of needs considered (by us) to encompass a sustainable life. For the sake of convenience we ended up with a definition of sustainability based on meeting needs within a 20 minute walk (1.5km) of Widcombe Parade i.e. a need is considered met if it can be satisfied within that 1.5km radius. More discussion on our definition of Sustainability can be found in the Addendum (pages 48-49).

The needs discussion and complete set of needs that we arrived at can be found in the pages following page 6. This covers themes such as Food, Shelter, Energy for Warmth, etc leading up to the needs for Communication, Education, etc There is a bit of hierarchy here but not much. There are a total of 51 (sub) needs identified, summarised in the table starting on page 12.

The next stage of work was to consider whether these needs are Met, or Not Met, or Partly Met. This can be found in the pages following page 14. 33 of the needs were defined as Met, one was defined as Not Met, and 17 were defined as Partly Met. This position is summarised in the table starting on page 39.

Lastly, we examined only those needs which were considered Not Met or Partly Met, and then tried to come up with actionable suggestions which might lead to those needs being better met. There are 45 of these. A full discussion of these can be found on the pages following page 41, but the summary is on the following two pages (pages 4-5).

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## SUMMARY OF SUGGESTIONS

The following is a set of one one-sentence descriptions of the suggestions for improving Widcombe's sustainability. For a fuller discussion of what these are about see the section starting at page 41.

Suggestion	Sub-Need and Suggestions	
	'Growing Our Food'	
#1	(1)	More allotments or more plots within existing allotments.
#2	(2)	Create and run a 'GardenShare' scheme.
#3	(3)	Bring uncultivated plots of public space into use – 'guerilla gardening'.
	'Foraging for Food'	
#4	(1)	Create a guide of food available wild and for free within Widcombe.
	'Sufficiency of Housing'	
#5	(1)	Campaign to restrict student numbers so that supply and demand for accommodation are in balance.
#6	(2)	Try to get empty properties back into use.
	'Range of Housing Types'	
#7	(1)	Campaign more on ghettoization of housing areas to maintain a healthy balance, in particular respect of student housing.
	'Help to Insulate our Homes'	
#8	(1)	Ask for review of the 'Energy at Home' programme to work out ways to improve it.
#9	(2)	Review of Planning Policy with special consideration for restrictions on measures such as Solar PV cells, and consideration of a BATNEEC policy.
	'Reliable source of mains electricity'	
#10	(1)	Encourage homeowners to switch to suppliers that include renewable sources of electricity.
	'Access to bus services'	
#11	(1)	Consider the need for a better bus service to Ralph Allen School.
	'Pedestrians'	
#12	(1)	Under the review of the Rossiter Rd scheme continue to push for better pedestrian safety especially at the White Hart junction (Widcombe Hill and Prior Park Rd).
#13	(2)	Continue to campaign for a more useable subway under the A36/Claverton St.
	'Cycling'	
#14	(1)	[Suggestions are left to the 'better cycling' group within Improving Widcombe.]
	'Recycling of glass, metal, etc'	
#15	(1)	Ask for street litter bins that allow segregation of the different materials.
#16	(2)	Run a 'Keep Widcombe Tidy' campaign.
#17	(3)	Provide more general recycling facilities beyond the current 'Destructor' site.
#18	(4)	Encourage traders to manage their waste/recycling better.
#19	(5)	More 'waste awareness' education is needed especially for students and their landlords.
#20	(6)	Encourage more enforcement against waste offenders and fly-tippers.
	'Improving Air Quality'	

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#21	(1)	Improved monitoring of pollutants including Particulate Matter (PM) emissions and publication of Air Quality data that is available.
#22	(2)	Encourage schools to do more walking/cycling of pupils to school.
#23	(3)	Campaign for a Bath Low Emission Zone (LEZ) and for an A36/A46 link road.
#24	(4)	Consider campaigning for more traffic weight limits to get heavy traffic out of Bath (and the A36 through Widcombe).
#25	(5)	Campaign for multi-operator bus passes and cheaper fares.
#26	(6)	'Taxi buses' to limit the number of private cars on the road.
#27	(7)	Discourage the removal of trees in planning consents.
#28	(8)	Plant more roadside trees subject to practical constraints.
#29	(9)	More work with restaurants etc putting out bad smells from Brunel Square.
'Freedom From noise'		
#30	(1)	See#24 above.
#31	(2)	Review Rossiter Rd scheme to allow emergency vehicles through faster.
'Visible and Active Law Enforcement'		
#32	(1)	Raise Police visibility inc a possible 'drop-in' location for Widcombe.
#33	(2)	Consider more use of CCTV in Widcombe e.g. in Parade, to discourage anti-social behaviour and crime.
#34	(3)	Encourage the Widcombe Association to have a specialist member for police liaison and community affairs.
#35	(4)	Raise visibility of the Policy Enquiry office in Manvers St.
#36	(5)	Encourage more visibility of all Police activities.
'Can we call on higher-level policing when needed?'		
#37	(1)	Ask the Police to find a better and more visible operations centre.
'Broadband services'		
#38	(1)	Can we have a publicly-accessible high-speed broadband (internet cafe) in Widcombe e.g. at the new Social Club?
#39	(2)	Provide publicly accessible broadband terminal with printing and scanning facilities.
#40	(3)	Encourage any new build housing to have fibre rather than copper connections.
'Postal Services'		
#41	(1)	Encourage a full-time sub-Post Office in Widcombe possibly located within an existing business.
#42	(2)	If a full-time sub PO is not possible how about one just operating at Christmas?
#43	(3)	More parcel pick-up and collection points.
'Access to TV and Radio'		
#44	(1)	Operate a scheme to repair and recycle DAB radios.
#45	(2)	Signal-boosting for those on low income or where satellite reception is not available.

## NEEDS ANALYSIS

In this section we attempt to come up with a set of needs (and sub-needs) required to meet a sustainable life. This set is not exclusive to Widcombe, but may be considered applicable to modern 'western' life wherever it is found.

The original 'hierarchy of needs' concept came from Abraham Maslow's psychology work in 1943 looking at what motivates human behaviour. Maslow proposed five different kinds of needs, starting at the lowest level with survival (food and shelter), followed by safety, next love and belonging, then respect, and finally self-actualisation. In our discussion here we are not concerning ourselves with the personal motivators such as love, respect etc, but among higher levels of need for our society it is not unreasonable to consider the needs to communicate with one another, to educate our children, and even to enjoy cultural and entertainment diversions!

### 1. Food.

While recognising that food choices are entirely a matter for personal preferences (and a lot of vegetarian arguments are made on the basis of sustainability) it is we think important to try to ensure that we have choices and options about where we get our food from. For many at the present time that currently involves a trip to the supermarket in car. There we load up with stuff that may have been flown in from all ends of the earth. At the other extreme, we can meet at least a few of our food needs by growing vegetables in our own gardens or on allotments.

Looking for sustainability improvements we need to think about providing more opportunities to grow our own, and to shop locally (walking) purchasing more food that is sourced locally. Where are our local butcher, baker, etc? And what about foraging, namely the option to find food growing locally. There is a fourth need here namely to obtain ready-cooked food at restaurant or takeaway.

The set of sub-needs we came up with is as follows:

- a) Buying our food.
- b) Growing our food.
- c) Foraging for food.
- d) Restaurant or takeaway.

### 2. Shelter

We all need roofs over our heads. These can be made from all sorts of materials, some of which may involve significant amounts of energy in their production or transport. Then, in their assembly to produce houses their design can be sustainable or less so (see the [Code for Sustainable Homes](#)). Finally we should not forget the need to maintain our homes for which we need to be able to call on builders, plumbers, electricians etc using locally available materials.

Thinking about sustainability improvements we should be looking for more housing built from locally-sourced materials, put together in more sustainable ways. Our community needs to be

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able to support the means to maintain these homes, which means encouragement of the businesses, usually small, which will do this for us. Also, for a community to be sustainable there does need to be a reasonable mix of housing so that all people whether young, in-between or old, richer or not-so-rich can find somewhere to live.

This then gives the following sub-categories:

- a) Is there sufficient housing for the population?
- b) Is this housing of a range of types?
- c) Can we find builders, plumbers, etc?

### 3. Energy for warmth

At first sight it may appear that there is little we can do to improve the sustainability of keeping warm (and heating water, etc). We are greatly in thrall to fossil fuels mainly gas and oil for this. The sustainability of non-fossil fuels, e.g. wood, is fairly questionable when you consider the need to transport it, and anyway most wood users conveniently overlook that wood is only sustainable when the cycle is completed i.e. trees are grown to replace burnt stock and to compensate for the CO<sub>2</sub> released when the original wood is used.

However, while we may conclude there is not much to be done about sourcing our warmth energy, there are gains to be made we believe at the point where warmth is used i.e. in our homes. Already mentioned has been the scope to produce new homes which are designed and built to be sustainable following the Code for Sustainable Homes guidance. Then there exists a whole raft of opportunities to make our Existing Homes Fit for the Future.

*On a historical note there was a time when Bath generated its own town gas (see picture). This however was by no means sustainable because it depended on imported coal. The Bath Gas Light and Coke Company headquarterd in the Upper Bristol Rd, generated town gas and coke for Bath from imported coal from about 1818 to 1971. Ref: Museum of Bath at Work.*



Trying to make categories out of this we get:

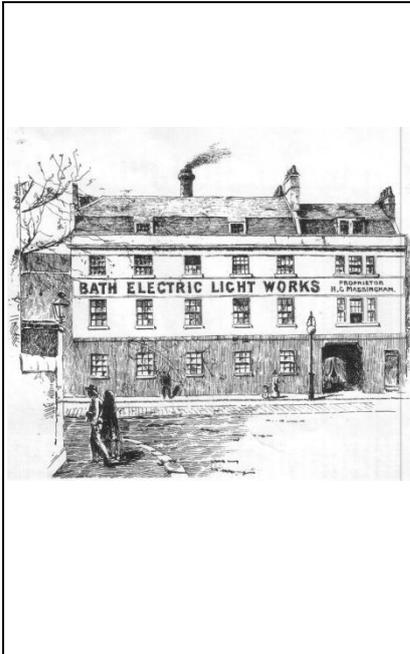
- a) Is there a source of gas for heating?
- b) Are there possibilities of other fuels for heating – coal, wood, oil, electricity..?
- c) Can we find help to insulate our homes to reduce need for heat?

### 4. Energy-electricity

Electricity is used for lighting, cooking, entertainment (TV etc), so is pretty much an indispensable part of life in its own right. Ignoring for now the possibility of locally-generated electricity (including locally-sourced fuel) the first question is whether we have a reliable source

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of externally generated electricity? Some may choose to attempt to generate their own electricity from solar, wind or other forms of power. Are there local suppliers for this?



*On another historical note, there was electricity generation taking place in Bath from about 1890 to 1974. This was initially done as an act of private enterprise by one Henry George Massingham, but was later in about 1897 taken over by Bath Corporation. Electricity generation took place in Bath from about 1890 - 1974. This used coal brought into the railway station and water for steam generation direct from the river. The main headquarters was in Dorchester Street, roughly on the site of the current bus station. In addition to electricity from coal serious investigation took place into generating electricity from the hydro-power at Pulteney Weir and from waste at the Destructor station. Ref: 'Electricity in Bath' by William Eyles, pub 1974.*

*The Bath Electric Tram company also used to generate its own electricity from headquarters at the Beehive Works in Walcot St, so-called because the noise of the generators resembled that of a hive of bees.*

This comes down to two core categories:

- a) Is there a reliable source of mains electricity?
- b) Can suppliers be found for generating our own electricity?

### 5. Water

Our basic need here is for an adequate supply of clean potable water. The question of sewage disposal is left to Section 7, Disposing of Waste.

*Historically Bath Corporation did provide water and sewage services to the city. This mysterious door pictured here located near the junction of Holloway and Calton Gardens is the entry to a tank formerly used to store water for distribution across the city. The tank continued in use as a supply reservoir until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century using water pumped from local treatment works.*



- a) Is there an adequate supply of clean potable water?

## 6. Transport, or Getting Around

The basis on which we consider this point is the need to access large-scale forms of public transport e.g. bus and rail. Also here we consider pedestrians' needs such as pavements, road crossing points, and cyclists' needs - purchase and repair, as well dedicated or shared tracks. And recognising that most of us have and use cars consider the efficiency of the road network and access to parking.

The set of needs is thus:

- a) Access to bus services.
- b) Access to rail services.
- c) Are pedestrians well catered?
- d) Do cycle services exist, e.g. to buy, rent, repair etc, and dedicated or shared cycle lanes.
- e) Is there an efficient road network with parking?

## 7. Waste Disposal

True sustainability in a more perfect society we would argue is one where no waste is produced, or if it is produced can be (and is) composted or recycled into nutritional or otherwise useful form. Unsustainability is the opposite situation where waste is allowed to accumulate and gradually chokes the community which produces it. The middle ground, which I will consider is the situation where waste is produced but is then disposed of to best effect with the minimum amount of transport. We should also consider the need to dispose of larger items in a responsible way. Disposal of sewage also comes under this heading.

The categories which emerge are thus:

- a) Is there recycling of most materials (paper, glass, metals, plastics, organic material)?
- b) Is there disposal of residual waste?
- c) Disposal of larger items?
- d) Sewage disposal?

## 8. Health

We'll not waste time trying to argue that every community should meet all health needs within itself. What it is reasonable to look for is that a community should be able to support within walking distance basic GP and dentist services, with pharmaceutical provision also available. It's worth considering too access to secondary health services (hospitals inc A&E), and not forgetting supplementary services such as chiropody etc.

This leads to the following categories:

- a) Primary healthcare (GP) available?
- b) Dentistry services?
- c) Pharmaceutical supplier?
- d) Hospital services inc A&E
- e) Supplementary services

## 9. Education

Within our community can we find schooling for our children, at least up to primary school age, within walking distance? As with Health (hospitals) it is probably not practical to consider that secondary school needs should be met within walking distance, but it is reasonable to consider whether secondary schooling can be met within the range of public transport. We can also consider the needs of pre-school, and post-school e.g. colleges of various descriptions, and adult education.

The set of needs thus comes down to:

- a) Pre-school provision?
- b) Primary school provision?
- c) Secondary school provision?
- d) Post-school education/training?

## 10. The Environment

There are many aspects of the living environment the presence or absence of which can improve or detract from our quality of life. Considered here are:

- a) Air quality inc smells
- b) Freedom from noise
- c) Surface water (rivers, streams)
- d) Wildlife

## 11. Community Safety

For our society to feel safe we need to feel that we can have recourse to policing if it is needed, and that this policing should be visible and have a demonstrable sense of 'knowing' our community. Low-scale transgressions of the law should be dealt with within the community. There is also the need to feel safe from fire, river accidents etc

- a) Is there law enforcement visible and active at a local level?
- b) Can we call on higher-level policing when needed?
- c) Is justice visibly dispensed?
- d) Is there a responsive Fire and Rescue Service within reasonable reach?

## 12. Culture, Entertainment and Exercise

What do we do once we have a roof over our head, and are fed, warm, healthy and safe? The chances are we look to some form of entertainment or social or cultural activity. This may take the form of home entertainment (TV/radio, books, hobbies) or going out to cinema, theatre, concerts, pubs, or any one of the thousands of things that people like to do once basic needs have been met. Exercise is for many a need, whether in the form of organised sport or just fresh air and gentle physical activity such as walking the dog. Lastly, we do not overlook opportunities to enjoy both Nature and the Human/Built Environment.

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- a) Access to theatre/music/cinema?
- b) Opportunities to socialise outside the home?
- c) Opportunities to do sport or exercise vigorously or swim?
- d) Opportunities for mild exercise in the open air?
- e) Opportunities to enjoy Nature?
- f) Opportunities to enjoy the Built Environment?

## 13. Religious Expression

For many in society religious expression is as much a need as others. While religion can be practised in the home, most forms of expression require access to some kind of place of worship, preferably within walking distance.

- a) Access to places of worship according to the nature of your religion (Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu etc)?

## 14. Communications

While it is good to communicate within our immediate family and neighbours, most would probably agree that communicating with others far away is a fairly important need. The forms which come to mind include postal services, telephone, and the internet. The latter two are not really services which can be provided within a small urban community such as Widcombe (though there are many instances of rural communities getting together to provide local broadband), it is probably worth considering access (in walking distance) to postal services. And finally, what about access to TV and Radio?

- a) Is there good voice telephone (land/mobile) service?
- b) Is there good broadband service?
- c) Are there postal services?
- d) Availability of TV and Radio?
- e) Are there local newspapers and journals?

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This analysis of needs above leads to the following table:

Need	Sub-needs
<b>1. Food</b>	
	a) Buying our food.
	b) Growing our food?
	c) Foraging for food?
	d) Restaurant or takeaway?
<b>2. Shelter</b>	
	a) Is there sufficient housing for the population?
	b) Is this housing of a range of types?
	c) Can we find builders, plumbers, etc?
<b>3. Energy for warmth</b>	
	a) Is there a source of gas for heating?
	b) Are there possibilities of other fuels for heating – coal, wood, oil, electricity?
	c) Can we find help to insulate our homes to reduce need for heat?
<b>4. Energy-electricity</b>	
	a) Is there a reliable source of mains electricity?
	b) Can suppliers be found for generating own electricity?
<b>5. Water</b>	
	a) Is there an adequate supply of clean potable water?
<b>6. Transport, or Getting Around</b>	
	a) Access to bus services?
	b) Access to rail services?
	c) Are pedestrians well catered?
	d) Do cycle services exist, e.g. to buy, rent, repair etc, and dedicated or shared cycle lanes.
	e) Is there an efficient road network with parking?
<b>7. Waste Disposal</b>	
	a) Is there recycling of most materials (paper, glass, metals, plastics, organic material)?
	b) Is there disposal of residual waste?
	c) Disposal of larger items?
	d) Sewage disposal?
<b>8. Health</b>	
	a) Primary healthcare (GP) available?
	b) Dentistry services?
	c) Pharmaceutical supplier?
	d) Hospital services inc A&E
	e) Supplementary service e.g. chiropody
<b>9. Education</b>	
	a) Pre-school provision?
	b) Primary school provision?
	c) Secondary school provision?
	d) Post-school education/training?
<b>10. The Environment</b>	
	a) Air quality inc smells.

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	b) Freedom from noise.
	c) Surface water (streams and rivers).
	d) Wildlife.
<b>11. Community Safety</b>	
	a) Is there law enforcement visible and active at a local level?
	b) Can we call on higher-level policing when needed?
	c) Is justice visibly dispensed?
	e) Is there a responsive Fire and Rescue service within reasonable reach?
<b>12. Culture, Entertainment and Exercise</b>	
	a) Access to theatre/music/cinema?
	b) Opportunities to socialise outside the home?
	c) Opportunities to do sport or exercise vigorously or swim?
	d) Opportunities for mild exercise in the open air?
	e) Opportunities to enjoy Nature?
	f) Opportunities to enjoy the Built Environment?
<b>13. Religion</b>	
	a) Access to places of worship according to the nature of your religion?
<b>14. Communications</b>	
	a) Is there good voice telephone (land/mobile) service?
	b) Is there good broadband service?
	c) Are there postal services?
	d) Is there access to TV and Radio?
	e) Are there local newspapers and journals?

## ARE THESE NEEDS PROVIDED FOR WITHIN WIDCOMBE?

### 1. Food

#### a) Buying our food.

There is ample provision for buying food within 1.5km of Widcombe Parade. Within the Parade there are the MyLocal and McColl's mini-markets. Further afield in the town centre, at Bear Flat, and on Bathwick Hill, there are further such establishments too numerous to name, as well as a number of specialist food shops.

#### NEED - MET

#### b) Growing our food.

This will not appeal to everyone, nor does every household have their own garden where it is possible to grow their own food. For those that want to go beyond what they can grow in their own gardens there are allotments. Within the 1.5km radius there are currently several of these, namely at Abbey View Gardens (60 plots, 24+ months), Lyncombe Hill Farm (51 plots, 24+ months), Lyncombe Vale (10 plots, 12+ months), Canal Gardens (44 plots, 24+ months), Bloomfield Road (147 plots, 0 months). The months figure given is the current (January 2016) waiting time for a plot.

In Bath there used to be a scheme called the Bath Area Gardenshare which tried to put would-be gardeners in touch with people whose gardens needed tending. This eventually failed because most gardens offered were in the wrong place (edge of Bath) relative to where the would-be gardeners were. This is an idea which might be revived in Widcombe (ideal job for the WA Gardening Club!).

The Transition Bath food group has an interesting food policy: *"Bath was largely self-sufficient in food until the 1950s. Our vision is that those rural-urban food links are re-established so that Bath can become, once again, a 'sustainable food city'."* In the Widcombe area, Transition Bath, jointly with the National Trust, has set up the Nuttery in Smallcombe Vale, and also operates a small 'guerrilla gardening' project at Cleveland House on the Kennet & Avon canal.

Having the opportunity to grow food also requires the means to buy seeds etc. Widcombe currently has the Prior Park Garden Centre where a wide range of seeds, plants and tools can be found. The Council offers the opportunity to buy compost bins at £18 (plus delivery) for a 220l bin.

#### NEED – PARTLY MET

#### c) Foraging for food.

Depending on the season there are foraging opportunities available, such as wild garlic leaves in the Spring, blackberries in the Autumn, likewise apples from Richens Orchard (NT) in Smallcombe, and eventually nuts/fruit from the nuttery (NT and Transition Bath) also in

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Smallcombe. What is currently lacking is a guide to where/when this food can be found, and what to do with it when found.

## NEED – PARTLY MET

d) Restaurant or takeaway.

There are plenty of opportunities to eat out or buy takeaway food within the 1.5km radius. On Widcombe Parade it is possible to name the White Hart, Ring of Bells, the Ram, Hon Fusion, Ruposhi, as well as two coffee shops – Lennie’s and Mus. Further afield in the town centre there are too many to name, and at Bear Flat there is also a reasonable choice.

## NEED - MET

## 2. Shelter

a) Is there sufficient housing for the population?

In order to assess the ‘sufficiency’ and ‘adequacy’ of housing in Widcombe it is necessary first to see ‘who lives here now’ and ‘who is likely to want to live here’. Data from the *2011 Census* for the Widcombe Ward confirm the perception of those living in the area:

- there is a very high proportion (29%) of ‘student age’ residents
- there is a very high proportion of privately rented (35%) and part-shared housing
- 32% of all households are occupied by one person only

Findings of the *B&NES Housing Stock Condition Survey* relevant to this brief investigation are:

- 86% of the 77,530 domestic dwellings are privately owned and either occupied or rented to tenants.

Compared with the national averages:

- the proportion of privately rented dwellings is higher, having rapidly grown in the last 10 years to 18%;
- more buildings are older, more being converted into flats and more as HMOs;
- residents are younger, reflecting larger working and student populations;
- there are more households of adults sharing with no children
- incomes are slightly lower as are the number of residents with a disability.

Like other university towns, Bath’s student population (about 30% at peak) has distorted the structure of many local communities such as Widcombe to a point where new patterns of life have become established; and the additional impact of high numbers of tourists is a further distortion of the situation.

The answer to whether the housing stock in Widcombe is ‘sufficient’ for family members to stay in the area as they grow up is probably NO, due to house prices being distorted by both scarcity and investment opportunities; the result being the migration of young adults to surrounding cheaper areas.

On the other hand, the answer to whether the housing in Widcombe is ‘sufficient’ for the area to sustain in terms of available land, current infrastructure, aesthetics, heritage, etc, is probably YES.

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## NEED – PARTLY MET

b) Is this housing of a range of types?

### Type of Housing

In a 'mature' area like Widcombe, with little space available for significant new housing, those coming to live in Widcombe are pre-selected by the existing housing stock, such that the pattern of occupancy reflects the suitability of properties to support various lifestyles (eg areas of terraced houses with multiple occupancy, or elegant Georgian villas for retirees) or to attract investors who have taken advantage of 'buy to let' or 'renovate to sell' opportunities.

No readily available information on the ages of property in Widcombe could be found.

### Housing Development

The last major new housing in Widcombe was provided during the late 1960s to 1980 when the Holloway area was redeveloped with 159 low-cost homes. Brownfield sites developed more recently along the Lower Bristol Road have predominantly been commercial, eg the Pickford's Storage and office complex on the former marshalling yards. A current example of a 'demolish and rebuild' project can be seen in Cheltenham Street where old housing is being replaced by 14 new dwellings. The large new blocks of flats of the *Riverside* development are just outside the study area boundary, although a small part of the latest building phase, eg Western Terrace behind *Homebase*, squeezes within the Widcombe ward boundary, providing 25 new dwellings of varying sizes.

A major new housing development that could well have a big impact on people who wish to live in Widcombe is the *Curo* plan for Mulberry Park and Fox Hill estates, where 700 (1200 eventually) new homes are to be built on the 48 acre former MoD land. The mixed development of private and 'affordable' homes will be 75% houses and 25% apartments, one third being 'affordable'. The whole development is planned to be carried out from 2016-2028 in five phases and will include the provision of a primary school, local community and arts centre and local shops. Of the houses for private sale, there is little to prevent investors from 'buying to let' for multi-occupancy as applies elsewhere in Bath.

Despite this large addition to housing in Bath, the prospect of an extra 9200 university students in Bath by 2020 (*Bath Chronicle 7 Jan 2016*) both in terms of pressure on housing and impact on local communities is daunting. Part of this pressure may be taken off by yet another proposal in Widcombe from *Ediston Real Estate* for offices and student accommodation on the *Pinesgate* site in Lower Bristol Road; however, no scheme has yet met with planning approval.

## NEED – PARTLY MET

c) Can we find builders, plumbers, etc?

One of the results of the high levels of rented housing and renovation activity throughout Bath is a large pool of service providers such as: builders, plumbers, electricians, decorators, etc, as evidenced by entries in the trade sections of Yellow Pages, Dentons and Thomson local directories as well as the internet.

However, the question 'Do you know a 'good' plumber?' – meaning one who will turn up on time, do a competent, tidy job and not charge the earth – is commonly asked. Moreover, trying

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to get such a tradesman to do work outside 'term time' when many rented properties are vacated, is extremely difficult, whilst these properties are refurbished for the next tenants.

The problem of finding a 'trustworthy' tradesman is partly met by:

- word of mouth recommendation or inspecting work carried out
- referring to trade associations which maintain quality standards
- referring to the '*Buy with Confidence – Approved Trader Directory 2015/16*' issued by the Trading Standards Department of B&NES.

**NEED - MET**

### 3. Energy for warmth

a) Is there a source of gas for heating?

**Mains gas** is available to all buildings in Widcombe - except the further end of Lyncombe Vale Road (where it can be added).

**NEED - MET**

b) Are there possibilities of other fuels for heating – coal, wood, oil, electricity..?

**Coal?** - plenty of sources on line, including "Ecoal50" (having 50% renewable content) from Coals2U.

**Wood?** - suppliers in Bathford (from their garden maintenance business) , Wellow ("locally sourced"), Keynsham and many others further afield.

**Oil?** - Depots at Farrington Gurney, Westbury, Westerleigh and Devizes.

**Electricity?** – see next section (2.4).

**NEED - MET**

c) Can we find help to insulate our homes to reduce need for heat?

Energy Efficient Widcombe (part of Widcombe Association) aims to involve and assist as many people as possible who live or work in Widcombe to save energy and reduce carbon emissions. Residents can find useful information on energy saving measures for 5 different types of Widcombe house by visiting [www.energyefficientwidcombe.co.uk](http://www.energyefficientwidcombe.co.uk) and downloading an Energy Savings Pack. Energy Efficient Widcombe are currently providing thermal imaging surveys but only for residents aged 60 and over and those on benefits.

BANES Sustainability Dept. The Community Sustainability Officer provides excellent advice and support, in particular for the BANES "Energy at home" programme. This programme provides grants for residents wanting to make energy efficient improvements to their homes. Some residents have experienced bureaucratic barriers with the programme but the Sustainability Team have worked hard to remove these.

Planning permission for PV roof panels and sash windows remains limited or impossible for listed buildings. Wall insulation for the older houses in Widcombe is limited due to planning restrictions (World Heritage site / Conservation area / Listed buildings).

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BANES Council doesn't have a list of accredited builders or suppliers for energy efficiency measures. However, West of England "Care and Repair" exists to help people over 60 and disabled people of all ages, and runs a Handyman service. The handypersons are experienced multi-skilled tradespersons. They all carry ID cards and their logo is clearly displayed on their vans and uniform. To contact them, phone 0300 323 0700.

Homebase, Francis DIY and Hardware in Moorland Road and other local builders merchants provide residents with supplies to insulate and draught proof their homes.

Two local companies provide useful services for up-grading or replacing sash windows.

**NEED - PARTLY MET**

#### 4. Energy-electricity

a) Is there a reliable source of mains electricity?

Yes, mains electricity is distributed by Western Power Distribution. There is the usual array of suppliers, differing in varying degrees on their commitment to providing 'non-fossil' electricity.

No source of fossil fuel generated electricity can be considered sustainable so there is clearly a focus needed on the uptake of renewable electricity generation for Widcombe. Bath and West Community Energy and Good Energy are both important players in this field. For this reason it is suggested that although there is a good supply of mains electricity, the sustainable/reliable element for the long term is only 'partially' met.

**NEED – PARTLY MET**

b) Can suppliers be found for generating own electricity?

Yes, there are numerous suppliers for wind turbines and solar PV panels, including a large number of Bristol and Gloucestershire based companies. Many of these are listed on:

<http://www.renewableenergyhub.co.uk/search-installers>.

The Bath Energy @Home advice service can help residents to find certified installers, while the Feed-in-Tariff for electricity generation provides a financial incentive for businesses and homeowners to use these technologies. <http://www.energyathome.org.uk>

By the end of December 2015 there were 1989 Solar PV installations across the BANES area, a ratio of 286 installations per 10,000 households (Source: DECC). There are approximately 2330 households in Widcombe ward so using the DECC ratio, it could be said that there are in the region of 66 solar PV installations in Widcombe.

The 'Green Guide to Bath' lists a number of installers for home electricity generation. However some of these are no longer trading.

**NEED - MET**

#### 5. Water

a) Is there an adequate supply of clean potable water?

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In short, yes, Wessex Water seems to provide a good supply. It is worth noting that in none of the dry summers over the last 40 years (since 1976) has there been a need for water restrictions (source: Wessex Water press office).

For those wanting to harvest rainwater, the Council does offer water butts at about £25 (+ delivery) for a 100l butt.

**NEED - MET**

### 6. Transport, or Getting Around

a) Access to bus services.

A good range of bus services to a wide area is available from Bath Bus Station which is within the 1.5km radius of Widcombe Parade. Bus services from Widcombe (and therefore accessible to a greater demographic) are in much shorter supply. There are concerns over the cost of bus services and the fact that certain locations do not have an adequate service through Widcombe, such as Ralph Allen and Beechen Cliff Schools. RUH is accessible by bus for Widcombe residents but only from the bus station or on the Circular route (20a/c) which is not accessible for some people. Buses are operated by a number of private bus companies.

The assessment should also consider age and accessibility of the bus fleet itself i.e. do they have lower floors and are accessible for wheelchairs and pushchairs.

**NEED – PARTLY MET**

b) Access to rail services.

Access to good rail services from Widcombe is excellent with Bath Spa rail station just over the ward boundary and within 1.5km of Widcombe Parade. Bath Spa has excellent links to London, Bristol, local rail stations, the South West and via connections from Bristol, the Midlands and beyond.

**NEED - MET**

c) Are pedestrians well catered for?

Following the Rossiter Road improvement scheme, pedestrians are now mainly well catered for in the 'Widcombe Village' area, although the Widcombe Association is reviewing the scheme to ensure that the pedestrian friendly elements (among others) are carried through. Traffic through Widcombe Parade is now greatly reduced, a number of crossings service the locality, and the Courtesy Street in theory provides equal right of way for pedestrians.

Other areas of Widcombe ward also cater well for pedestrians such as the National Trust skyline and canal and river towpaths.

There are some areas where pedestrians are not well catered for such as the underpass on Claverton St.

Assessment of road safety is needed with respect to pedestrians and cyclists.

**NEED – PARTLY MET**

d) Do cycle services exist, e.g. to buy, rent, repair etc, and dedicated or shared cycle lanes.

Cycle lanes are available but only on a small number of routes. There are however a good number of cycle friendly routes using the canal and riverside towpaths and the two tunnels route.

Cycle shops to buy rent and repair are available in the city centre, in particular, Avon Valley Cyclery is located at Bath Spa rail station, just over the boundary of Widcombe ward.

There is already a WA working group for cycling which covers these issues. It was therefore agreed at the January Sustainability Group meeting that there is no need to duplicate the work here.

### NEED – PARTLY MET

e) Is there an efficient road network with parking?

This subject will in part be covered by the review of the Rossiter Road scheme. For the rest of the ward, a good road network does exist. However, as to be expected for a city with many historical buildings, many roads are not fit for the type and prevalence of modern day vehicles. Available parking is a concern for many but aims to be balanced with the needs of other road users.

Traffic is clearly a problem at peak times through Widcombe centre but this does not necessarily mean that the road network is inefficient. It could be that solutions to encourage other forms of transport are needed.

### NEED - MET

## 8. Waste Disposal

a) Is there recycling of most materials (paper, glass, metals, plastics)?

### Recycling Performance in Bath in 2014

Efforts made by B&NES to collect, segregate and responsibly dispose of recyclable materials in a cost-effective manner have been very successful. The *Recycling and Recovery End Use Register 2014/15* provides a comprehensive breakdown of the arisings and fates of all recycled materials from kerbside collection, from 'bring banks' and from recycling centres. The detailed analysis is far too large to be included here, but the data show that B&NES is performing as well as, if not slightly better than, other English LAs of similar size. However, the predictions in the *Waste Strategy Review* suggest that further improvements to recycling performance up to 2020 will be far less successful – mainly because the 'easy wins' have already been made.

Further opportunities for reducing waste will depend on:

- technological innovation in manufacturing and waste treatment processes;
- cost-effective disposal routes via commercial waste treatment specialists;
- education of waste producers (businesses and householders) regarding purchasing policies, conservation of resources and materials and efficient segregation of unwanted items.

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- improving opportunities and facilities for disposing of materials correctly.

### Specialist Recycling or Recovery Waste Services not provided by B&NES

Healthcare premises in Widcombe, eg dentists, medical centres, care homes use specialist firms, eg *PHS*, to provide services for the removal and safe disposal of materials which are classified as '*Clinical Waste*', such as needles and items contaminated with bodily or infectious fluids, drugs, etc.

Some potentially infectious materials arising from the slaughter and butchery of animals (eg Bartlett's in Cheltenham Street), classified as 'Animal By-products' also have to be segregated for specialist removal and incineration.

Engineering and mechanical workshops segregate and store materials such as oils and metals for removal and subsequent recovery by specialist processors.

Many restaurants and fast-food outlets have '*Catering Waste*' taken away by contractors; eg spent cooking oil taken away by J R Waste from Widcombe's 'Ruposhi' for reprocessing as bio-diesel.

Firms having to dispose of '*Catering Waste*' and edible foodstuffs are being pressurized into donating to charities unwanted materials suitable for eating, subject to quality control and health safeguards.

### Other disposal routes for recyclables and unwanted goods

Householders and businesses dispose of their recyclables largely to B&NES as allowed by the payment of council tax and business rates; however, reusable or recyclable materials may be disposed via other routes, all of which require some element of segregation or preparation.

- Commercial specialists (eg skip hire, car scrappage, scrap merchants etc)
- Commercial deals (eg trade in with new purchase, eg boilers, white goods, furniture)
- Service providers (eg builders, gardeners, decorators, plumbers, etc who 'take away' materials arising from their work)
- Donations to charity shops and doorstep collections; online donation via *freecycle.org* in Bath
- Private sale (such as *EBay* or *Gumtree* online, small ads in papers, etc)

**NEED – PARTLY MET**

b) Is there disposal of residual waste?

Mixed and indeterminate wastes in 'black bags', along with the contents of 'non-recyclable' skips at recycling centres, are transported to the *New Earth* MBT (mechanical & biological treatment) plant at Avonmouth where recyclable materials are extracted (about 15% of the total), some separated organic materials are composted and used as soil conditioning and the remainder goes as Refuse-derived Fuel (RDF) for incineration and energy recovery; in this way about 95% of mixed waste received by *New Earth* does not go to landfill, the most expensive disposal route due to punitive taxation.

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Landfill tax has doubled in the last five years in order to encourage alternative, 'greener' waste disposal policies. The strap line of the *Waste Strategy Review* was 'Towards zero waste in 2020', but such an ambitious target is heavily dependent on waste producers, especially householders, playing their roles in properly sorting out their rubbish.

In a manner similar to food safety standards being displayed by shops and restaurants, perhaps a council run scheme of awarding premises with 'good waste management' awards could encourage better behaviour by at least one sector of Bath life.

### NEED - MET

#### c) Disposal of larger items?

The latest B&NES waste guidance leaflet '*Recycle More 2016*' describes the collection of larger items (*Bulky Waste*) from households for a fixed charge. Residents are encouraged to consider donating unwanted goods in good condition to charities or re-use organisations. Residents can also take large items themselves to the recycling centres if they have suitable transport.

Typically, bulky unwanted items such as mattresses and white goods will be removed by suppliers when newly purchased replacement items are delivered, either for a fee or as part of the purchase deal.

### NEED - MET

#### d) Sewage disposal?

The collection and disposal of all domestic sewage and trade effluents discharged to the public sewers is the responsibility of *Wessex Water*, the regional utility supply company owned by the Malaysian power group YTL. The head offices of *Wessex Water* are in Claverton Down Road, Bath.

Combined sewage, trade effluents and some surface (rain) waters are collected in a sewerage system of ages varying from Victorian to the present day, flow to a large pumping station in Midland Road and pumped about 8 km to a treatment works by the river Avon in Saltford.

Residents of domestic dwellings discharge 'domestic sewage' only. Effluents discharged from commercial premises, eg the launderette on Widcombe Parade, are permitted to discharge to public sewer subject only to standard conditions imposed by *Wessex Water*. Industrial effluents tend to be of a higher volume and more polluting in composition (such as Bartlett's or Bath Bakery in Cheltenham Street) and need individual assessment of their impacts on the Saltford Works.

Other than the trunk sewers, which have had to be enlarged relatively recently to cope with the increasing volume of sewage from an expanding population (residents and visitors), most of the urban sewerage is contemporary with the ages of the buildings; so, for example, a large part of the Oldfield Park area will have late Victorian drainage.

Water usage per head of population has steadily increased over the years due to changes in washing and laundry habits, so the old drainage systems which were designed for lower flows

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now have to work consistently nearer their design maximum capacities. This assumes that the fabric of the sewerage system is in good condition, despite some of it being over 100 years old. The incorrect disposal of solids (e.g. disposable nappies) and cooking fats cause blockages that reduce sewer capacity even further.

NEED - MET

### 8. Health

a) Is Primary healthcare (GP) available?

The following are easily accessible i.e. within our 1.5km radius circle:

Widcombe surgery

Pulteney Practice

Number 18 Surgery

Oldfield Surgery

All these surgeries run urgent, same day or walk-in clinics. There are several other surgeries available a little outside the 1.5 km circle.

NEED - MET

b) Dentistry services?

The two Widcombe based dentists, Widcombe Dental Services and Widcombe Dental Solutions only provide private dentistry.

NHS dentists can be found at Argyle St, Oldfield Dental Centre, mydentist Combe Down, Rush Hill Dental Centre, and in Twerton.

NEED - MET

c) Pharmaceutical supplier?

There is an excellent Pharmacist in Widcombe Parade. Others can be found both in the town centre and at Bear Flat.

NEED - MET

d) Hospital services inc A&E

The Royal United Hospital with A & E is 1.9 miles from Widcombe parade.

NEED - MET

e) Supplementary services

**Podiatry** is available in Widcombe Parade and also in Green Park and further afield.

**Optometrists** are widely available in the city centre, the nearest being in Boots Southgate and in Manvers Street.

**Physiotherapy** is available at Widcombe surgery, the Sports Centre and across the city.

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**Massage** available in Widcombe Parade.

**Complementary and Alternative Medicine** available across the city.

NEED - MET

## 9. Education

a) Pre-school provision?

Widcombe is served by Acorns Pre-school, with an Ofsted rating of 'Outstanding'. However it is often oversubscribed. There are a number of other pre-schools available within the 1.5km radius.

NEED - MET

b) Primary school provision?

Widcombe is served by Widcombe Infant and Junior Schools both rated as Outstanding, and the Paragon Junior School in the private sector. Bathwick St Mary, Moorlands Road Primary School and Oldfield Park Infants are also within the 1.5km radius.

NEED – MET

c) Secondary school provision?

Within the 1.5km radius, Widcombe is served by Beechen Cliff, Ralph Allen, and Hayesfield state secondary schools and Prior Park College and King Edwards' Schools in the private sector.

NEED - MET

d) Post-school education/training?

All of the Secondary schools mentioned above have post 16 colleges or sixth forms attached to them. Among others, there is Bath College of Further Education in the city centre. Bath University is also within the 1.5km radius.

NEED - MET

## 10. The Environment

a) Air quality inc smells?

For the purposes of this exercise, air quality includes emissions of key pollutants Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) and Particulate Matter (PM-10), and has been assessed so far on the basis of whether or not Widcombe has good or poor air quality. For this exercise, air quality also includes odour.

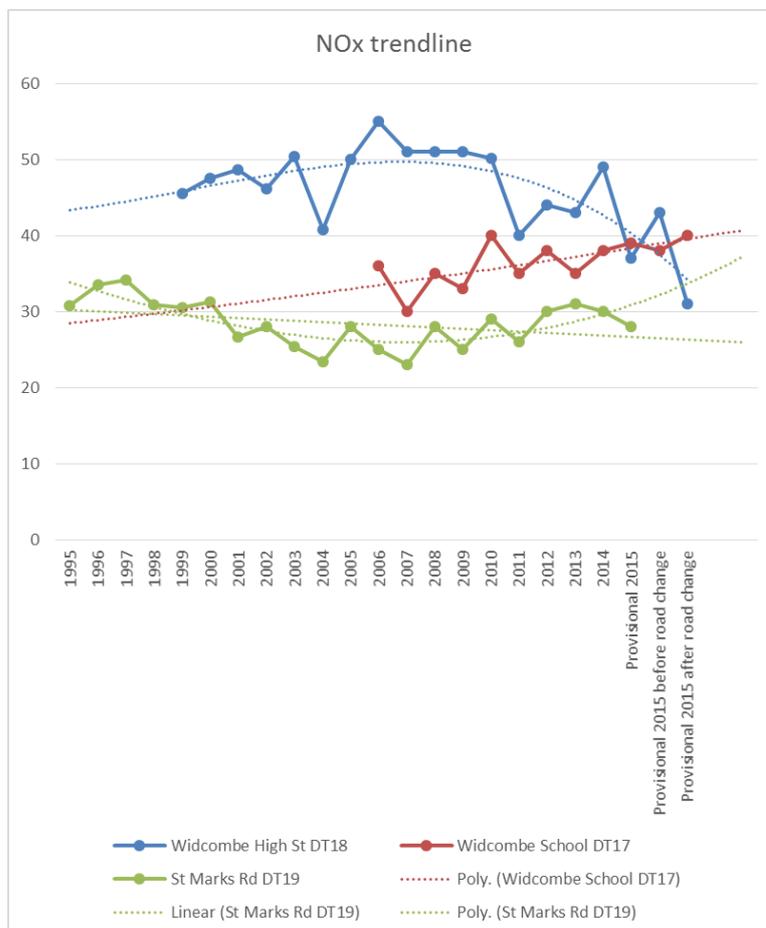
Bath has an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in place which mainly covers the city centre. In Widcombe it is in place for Pulteney Road, Rossiter Road and the Wellsway. An AQMA is legally required to be declared when an area exceeds National Air Quality Objectives for a pollutant. In Bath's case, it is maximum levels of NO<sub>2</sub> that are in some places exceeded. This is particularly concerning for residents living and working by the main road network to which the AQMA applies and also for users of Widcombe Infants and Junior Schools where the NO<sub>2</sub> levels are at best close to the Government's objective. An Air Quality Action Plan has been in place to address air quality issues and it is expected that this will be updated this year (2016).

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NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations at three of the Widcombe monitoring stations. Source: BANES

	Widcombe High Street, $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	Widcombe School, $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	St Marks Rd, $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$
2006	55	36	25
2007	51	30	23
2008	51	35	28
2009	51	33	25
2010	50	40	29
2011	40	35	26
2012	44	38	30
2013	43	35	31
2014	49	38	30
Provisional 2015	37	39	28
Provisional 2015 before road change	43	38	
Provisional 2015 after road change	31	40	
<b>Government's Annual Average Objective</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>

When these values are plotted against time and trend lines added we get:



While it is gratifying to note that NO<sub>2</sub> in Widcombe Parade is now below the objective level and is falling (presumably as a result of the recent completion of the new road layout), it is also of concern to note that at both Widcombe School and at St Marks Rd the trend line can be seen to be rising, and that in the case of the Widcombe School level it is already nudging the objective level (40  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ).

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PM-10 is not measured at the Widcombe monitoring stations but where it is measured in Bath, it does not currently exceed statutory limits. There is currently a problem with unpleasant odour arising from some of the eating establishments just on the edge of Widcombe ward at Brunel Square.

Ongoing monitoring of local PM-10 levels is needed to ascertain whether or not the Rossiter Road Scheme has had an impact on reducing particulate pollution. It is the rising trend of NO<sub>2</sub> levels at Widcombe School and St Marks Rd and the lack of data on some pollutants which makes us reluctant to say that this need has been met, and so should be declared Not Met.

### NEED – NOT MET

#### b) Freedom from noise?

Residents on the A36 through Widcombe suffer from increased road noise from heavy vehicles at night time. Those living higher up the hills and in particular, facing the city, are exposed to higher levels of noise from the city centre from traffic and construction.

There are concerns over noise from emergency vehicle sirens, especially given views from some in the fire service that sirens don't assist the emergency vehicles in getting through traffic quicker. This issue has been raised in the review of the Rossiter Road scheme, potentially suggesting adjustments to traffic lights so that an emergency vehicle can go straight through, making them red on both sides of the road.

It was agreed at the January Sustainability Group meeting that there is no need to include noise from pedestrian crossings.

### NEED – PARTLY MET

#### c) Surface water (rivers, streams)

The River Avon provides part of the boundary of Widcombe ward and the Kennet and Avon Canal runs through Widcombe. These are important residential, leisure, business and tourism spaces. An Environment Agency Report (2000) concluded that:

'Much of the litter was found to arise from those who live along the river or those who visit the river and surrounding areas. There was also the potential for waste to escape from industrial sites along the river front. Sewage debris from the many combined storm overflows through Bath and some misconnections into small watercourses was also found in the River Avon'

There have been issues with contaminated water from misconnected drains (Calton Gardens) where new extensions have been built and they have connected up the surface water drain rather than sewerage drain. EA officers can provide further information.

### NEED - MET

#### d) Wildlife

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Issues pertaining to 'wildlife' are being addressed at another WA group looking at 'Wildlife and the Natural Environment'. To prevent duplication of effort, it was agreed at the January Sustainability Group meeting that there is no need to cover this need here.

Suffice to say, we are aware that biodiversity is a significant component of sustainable living, providing increased wellbeing through people's contact with nature in their daily lives and generating substantial benefits for local communities through the action of Green Infrastructure in alleviating problems associated with climate change. We are aware that the Wildlife and Natural Environment Group will encourage action to enhance biodiversity by residents, the Council and other relevant bodies.

**NEED – PARTLY MET**

## 11. Community Safety

a) Is there law enforcement visible and active at a local level?

### Police Organisation in Bath

Police officers in Bath are part of the *Avon & Somerset Constabulary* and the area of 'Widcombe' corresponds almost exactly with the *Bath 'City South' Policing Area*. The City South Policing Team comprises 7 officers, but the three most senior also head up other Bath policing teams, so are not 'dedicated' to Widcombe.

### Policing Profile

When asked about their perception of 'safety' in the community, many respondents link their attitudes to the traditional visibility of 'officers on the beat' and, to a lesser extent, seeing police patrol cars in the neighbourhood, but they would rarely refer to evidence from detailed crime statistics based on modern policing methods. Despite claims that policing in Bath will be unaffected, the recent move from a highly visible Police Station to an inadequately signed, insignificant back-office will only have reduced the visibility of police officers, leading the public to question whether the levels of police activity are sufficient to deal with local crime.

### Crime in Widcombe

Some of the benefits for Widcombe residents of living close to the facilities and opportunities provided by the centre of Bath are reduced by the spill over of crime and public disorder that is linked to the night time centre economy and alcohol-fuelled behaviour. Data on the *Community and Safety* page of the B&NES website state that 32% of all violent crime happens during the night time economy hours of 9 pm to 3 am on Fridays and Saturdays.

The Community Safety page of the B&NES website states that:

- Widcombe is 4<sup>th</sup> in the league table of total crimes committed in Bath, and that
- Widcombe is 3<sup>rd</sup> in the league table for burglaries, thefts and robberies.

Schemes to lessen public disorder and, thereby, improve safety at night time have included:

- *Night Watch*, a subscription based scheme for licenced premises, providing radio links, plus street and taxi marshals, particularly on Friday and Saturday nights;

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- Taxi marshals at taxi ranks over weekends;
- Operation *Eutaxy* that provided extra police officers during peak weekend summer evenings.

The frequencies of crimes during the last year generally show an increase during the summer months, but not spectacularly so; perhaps the 'relaxed' summer conditions offer more opportunities for crimes such as burglary and alcohol-induced behaviour, or simply the disposition of the police may allow them to be more effective.

In her '*Police & Crime Plan 2015-2017*' Police and Crime Commissioner Sue Mountstevens listed her priorities for police action resulting from public consultation:

- tackling anti-social behaviour
- tackling domestic and sexual abuse
- preventing and reducing burglary
- improving road safety
- putting victims first

From the headline statistics stated in the *Police & Crime Plan*, it is sobering to note that:

- Of those who suffered from anti-social behaviour only 61% say their case was fully resolved.
- Although 96% of burglary victims say they are satisfied with the overall service they receive, only 12% of burglary investigations were fully resolved.
- Burglary shows a gratifyingly 5 year decline from 1186 cases in 2009-10 to 839 cases in 2013-14.
- There was a 26% increase in reported domestic & sexual abuse offences in the last year, but only 37% of cases were fully resolved.
- 87% of criminal justice outcomes are successful!

The standout statistic of the crime figures, although not the most heinous of crimes, is the catch-all offence of 'anti-social behaviour'; 486 in the last twelve months and 36% of all recorded crime. The situation for the past few years has been similar, such that a comprehensive and ambitious multi-agency *Community Safety Plan 2009-12* for 'improving actual and perceived safety in B&NES' was established. The plan was extended to 2014, but the current relevant page on the B&NES website has no updated reference for 2015-16.

### NEED – PARTLY MET

b) Can we call on higher-level policing when needed?

Additional street policing is commonly pre-arranged for particular events, such as the Bath start of the *Tour of Britain* cycle race, or the *Bath Half Marathon*.

Most of the 'support' arms of the police are now scattered throughout the area, such as the drugs squad, the CSI unit and dog-handlers, because current police thinking has gone away from centralised locations, resulting in the sale of a number of police properties. For central Bath, including Widcombe, this may well mean delays in the response of support services to crimes

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simply because of the travelling involved, plus the possible drop in co-ordination; response priorities may also have to be reassessed due to the disposition of resources.

The Avon & Somerset Chief Constable and the PCC have stated their '*commitment to collaboration with other police forces to maintain and improve service to the public*'; examples are, *Tri Force* a collaboration with A & S, Gloucester and Wiltshire forces; and *Zephyr*, in which five south west forces collaborate against serious and organised crime.

### NEED – PARTLY MET

c) Is justice visibly dispensed?

#### The Outcomes of Dealing with Local Crime

The outcomes of policing and judicial activity for the period Dec 2014 to Nov 2015 for all the 876 cases help assess whether justice is dispensed 'adequately' in the Widcombe area. The large (60%) proportion of cases where no further action was taken illustrates just how difficult a job the police have. Once offenders get into the system the data suggest that they are variously and adequately dealt with – the enduring problem is catching the perpetrators of crime and then presenting sufficient evidence to support prosecution.

### NEED - MET

d) Is there a responsive Fire and Rescue Service within reasonable reach?

#### Emergency Services

In many emergency situations there will be a 'multi-agency' response, each service being responsible for its area of particular expertise: for example, a serious road traffic accident involving a bulk chemical tanker would require police, ambulance, fire & rescue and environment agency attendance.

#### Police

Apart from their day to day activities described above, the police are the first response service for dealing with serious incidents like sieges, hostage situations and terrorist incidents; other agencies eg bomb disposal, would be summoned by the senior police incident officer.

#### Ambulance

All NHS ambulance services in B&NES and south west counties are operated by the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWASFT), with head office in Exeter and combined area office and control room for Bath in Bristol. Bath ambulance station is located at Cleveland Bridge in a location fortuitously handy for residents of Widcombe. The station is the base for five fully-equipped ambulances and four rapid-response paramedic vehicles. Bath station does not have any motor cycle paramedics, but does have the ability to call on emergency helicopters based at Henstridge (E of Yeovil) or Filton (Bristol) or Devizes.

#### Fire & Rescue

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Avon Fire & Rescue Service (AF&RS) provide emergency and protection services to B&NES, Bristol, N Somerset and S Gloucestershire; their headquarters are in Bristol and they currently maintain 23 fire stations. Emergency 999 fire calls are answered by Fire Service Control based on Lansdown, Bath.

Bath Fire Station, built in 1938 next to Cleveland Bridge, is crewed by whole-time fire fighters 24 h/d on a four watch shift system (15 per watch), but in busy periods some 'retained' (part time) fire fighters can augment the Bath force. This station's operational area is 119 km<sup>2</sup>, two thirds rural and one third urban. Because Bath does not have a significant area of heavy or chemical industry, like Avonmouth, there is no need to have the specialist resources for dealing with such industrial emergencies.

AF&RS are carrying out reorganisation as outlined in their 2014 plan '*Investing in the Future*'. Without considering employment conditions and work patterns, the proposals will not reduce the operational capacity of the Bath Station; in fact, the opening in early 2016 of the new fire station at Hicks Gate (near the A4 and Avon E ring road) could improve support for Bath fire crews.

The Bath Station 'fleet' comprises: 4 'fire engines' of varying types with one reserved for the retained crews, an animal and water rescue unit plus a water safety unit with incident response boat. The new water rescue craft is big and has to be launched off a slipway; for emergencies in the Avon below Pulteney weir the only ramp is by Ferry Lane (in Widcombe). Bath Station are hoping to acquire a lighter inflatable craft that can be manually launched from anywhere by the riverside.

River access and safety provisions (included because of its recent high 'public safety' profile)

Persistent vandalism of the former lifebuoys and some highly publicised drownings have resulted in significant Council expenditure on safety improvements to river edge protection. Access to the Avon south riverside footpath in Widcombe extends from North Parade Bridge to the junction of the Kennet & Avon Canal, thence to Churchill Bridge; the entire length is bordered by strong steel fencing. Activity on and alongside the river and canal here is high, so one of the new river rescue stations (no. S57) has been installed near the river/canal confluence. Further access to the Avon south riverside is by the new *Riverside* project (behind *Homebase*), where a steel fence has been installed, except for a stretch for mooring that allows direct river access; here, two of the new rescue stations (S49 & 51) have been provided.

For practical reasons no safety fencing has been installed alongside the canal or the locks, despite the much higher levels of activity, both on and alongside the water.

### Flood

Whether caused by rivers such as the Avon or ground waters, major flooding emergencies are primarily the responsibility of the *Environment Agency*, an executive non-departmental public body, funded through *DEFRA*, with a head office in Bristol. Bath is in the *Wessex Area* which has area offices in Bridgwater and Blandford. The EA issue flood warnings on radio and TV (see Communications Topic), and provide a dedicated emergency *Flood Line* telephone number for information and advice. Warnings will also be issued on respective web sites. The EA website

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provides maps of Bath showing where flooding is likely to occur and where development would be at risk.

B&NES is the 'Land Drainage Authority' for the area, dealing with minor watercourses and local flash-flooding incidents. B&NES do not provide sandbags for flood prevention

**NEED - MET**

### 12. Culture, Entertainment and Exercise

a) Access to theatre/music/cinema?

Bath has a rich cultural scene, so a short walk over the river can lead Widcombites to two theatres (Theatre Royal, Mission), two cinemas (Odeon, Little), and several venues where music of all kinds is performed. Closer to home in Widcombe we can look forward to the re-opening of the Social Club, but it remains to be seen what cultural distractions will be offered.

**NEED - MET**

b) Opportunities to socialise outside the home?

Within Widcombe Parade there are as already mentioned one good pub (the Ram) and two coffee shops (Lennie's, and Moose). The new Social Club will hopefully supplement this further. There are numerous similar establishments in the town centre, and also at Bear Flat.

**NEED - MET**

c) Opportunities to do sport or exercise vigorously or swim?

The best opportunity for this sort of activity lies at the Sports Centre on North Parade Road, which offers swimming and a variety of indoor sports. For outdoor games facilities can be hired at Beechen Cliff School and Hayesfield School. There is the Cricket Club on North Parade Rd. The Recreation Ground while mainly hosting the Rugby Club does host other sports, and the Croquet Club is also just next door. Alexandra Park hosts a Bowls Club. Tennis courts are available at Sydney Gardens and at Victoria Park, and there is a tennis club at Bloomfield Ave. The University with various facilities available is on the edge of our 1.5km circle.

**NEED - MET**

d) Opportunities for mild exercise in the open air?

By this we mean walking and cycling. Walking opportunities include around Beechen Cliff, the Bathwick meadows which incorporates the NT's Skyline Walk, the Kennet and Avon canal, and great swathes of open countryside up and beyond Church Lane to Rainbow Woods and spaces up there. Cycling routes for pleasure and exercise include the Kennet and Avon canal, and the Two Tunnels track, both of which lead into wide open countryside.

**NEED - MET**

e) Opportunities to enjoy Nature?

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To quote from David Goode's book, 'Nature in Towns and Cities', "The Widcombe valley just south of the railway station has a distinctly rural atmosphere with pony paddocks and hay meadows. A stream that flows down through these leafy suburbs has a rich assemblage of water-loving plants... Nearby is the Abbey Cemetery ... now overgrown with a mixture of meadow and wasteland plants supporting over 20 species of butterflies and a strident population of grasshoppers and crickets." House owners are all familiar with the presence of foxes, badgers and deer in their gardens, so for most Widcombe dwellers Nature can be enjoyed just by looking out of the window. For those that need more there are the canal (otters seen here), the river (peregrine falcons, cormorants), the Beechen Cliff woods, the Bathwick Meadows (buzzards), and the Rainbow Woods area.

NEED - MET

f) Opportunities to enjoy the Built Environment?

Widcombe itself contains many architectural gems which can be found just a short walk from the Parade. These include Widcombe Crescent, Church St, Lyncombe Hill, parts of Prior Park Rd, Sydney Bldgs, Bathwick Hill. The splendours of Bath town centre are also just a short walk away (too numerous to name).

NEED - MET

### 13. Religious Expression

a) Access to places of worship according to the nature of your religion (Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu etc)?

Widcombe has a selection of Christian churches (C of E, Baptist, Orthodox, Christian Scientist; Roman Catholic and Quaker across the river).

The Bath Islamic Centre and Mosque is in Manvers Street.

There are no Synagogues in Bath, nor facilities for Hindu believers.

The Bath Buddhist Group meets in Grove Street.

There is a wide range of other religious groups at University of Bath.

NEED - MET

### 14. Communications

a) Is there good voice telephone (land/mobile) service?

#### Telephone Services

Bath's telephone exchange is the Kingsmead Exchange in Monmouth Street, said to be serving 31,497 residential premises and 2449 non-residential premises. This exchange is 'fibre enabled' via services such as BT Infinity and Plusnet and some commercial service providers like Pipex, Sky, and TalkTalk, can offer enhanced performance because of 'LLU' – Local Loop Unbundling, where selected providers (Cable & Wireless, Sky, TalkTalk and Zen Internet) are allowed to use their own links from the exchange to customers' homes for broadband. This exchange also

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allows for 'FTTC' connections from selected street cabinets (see below) but coverage by this service is not complete. A limited cable service is available from Virgin from the exchange.

Anecdotal evidence from local estate agents suggests that there is no significant problem for householders to obtain telephone lines for residential properties; no information has been found relating to business premises.

### NEED - MET

b) Is there good broadband service?

#### Broadband Services

Government policy, as promoted by *Broadband Delivery UK* (BDUK), part of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, is to:

- provide basic broadband (2 Mbps) for all by 2016
- provide super-fast broadband coverage to 90% of the UK by 2016
- provide super-fast broadband coverage to 95% of the UK by 2017, and to
- explore options for near universal coverage of super-fast broadband across the UK by 2018.

Note: *Super-fast broadband* represents speeds (see below) of over 24 Mbps (megabits per second).

BDUK is also promoting a '*Super-connected Cities Programme*' in which support is to be provided for cities to develop '*digital infrastructure capabilities to remain internationally competitive*'.

#### Broadband Availability

According to the 'Broadband in Bath' page of *Cable.co.uk*, tests across Bath in mid-2015 showed that:

- the average download speed was 16 Mbps
- the average upload speed was 3 Mbps
- the fastest download speed was 316 Mbps

and the average broadband speeds (Mbps) related to post code are shown below:

Average Broadband Speeds related to Bath Postcodes in mid-2015			
BA2 1xx (Twerton, Whiteway)	23.5	BA2 4xx (Holloway, Greenway Lane, Dolemeads)	17.5
BA2 2xx (Rush Hill, The Oval)	21.3	BA2 5xx (Perrymead, Prior Park College)	-
BA2 3xx (Oldfield Park, Brougham Hayes)	23.7	BA2 6xx (Widcombe Hill, Church Street)	-

In August 2015 BT said that '...over 34,000 households and businesses served by the main telephone exchange in Bath now *have access to* high speed fibre broadband...' but this does not account for local conditions or the likely costs of a householder acquiring such a fast connection.

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The situation is ever-changing as more fibre optic cables are being installed and as service providers launch new offers, but at December 2015 for example, the best broadband speed in the BA2 postcode area is from *Plusnet* at 37.5 Mbps; however, *Cable.co.uk* state that ‘...there are some slow spots over the city and its surrounding areas, including Widcombe and Bathwick ...’.

Inadequate broadband services have been improved by local community projects: Claverton village has self-funded the provision of super-fast broadband that achieves speeds of up to 80 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload; and Royal Crescent residents have part-funded a super-fast broadband BT cabinet which provides speeds up to 80 Mbps download.

### Mobile Broadband

Information on *Broadband Genie.com* states that availability of 3G on all four network providers, EE, Three, O<sub>2</sub> and Vodafone, is reasonably good, with only EE offering a limited range 4G service. Coverage to the south of Bath is said to be ‘patchy’, with the topography causing a drop in signal to only 2G or even nothing.

### NEED – PARTLY MET

c) Are there postal services?

### Royal Mail Services

The Royal Mail Sorting Office is in Railway Place, behind Manvers Street, just over the river from Widcombe. Undelivered items may be collected there in person during office hours. It deals with a vast range of letters, packages and parcels to and from worldwide locations.

There are numerous Royal Mail posting boxes throughout Widcombe, with collections on six days of the week (Mon – Sat), although many of them now have last collection times of 9 am, making the last-minute birthday card with 1<sup>st</sup> class stamp a thing of the past!

Post Offices are now run by Post Office Ltd, separately from the mail service. The Bath main post office is on the corner of Green Street. The sub-post office on Widcombe Parade was closed several years ago, leaving remote sub post offices to serve Widcombe residents at Bear Flat McColl’s, at Moorland Road McColl’s and on Bradford Road, Combe Down.

Letters and small parcels are delivered by Royal Mail on six days a week by local postmen (and women!) who provide one of the few remaining traditional services (the milkman has long since disappeared from our streets). Large items are handled by ‘Parcel Force’.

### Local Mail Services

A ‘green’ newcomer to local letter postal services is ‘*Velopost*’ with a delivery office in Oldfield Park. It mainly offers a collection and delivery service for central postcodes of Bath (including Widcombe) and Bristol, using ‘green’ transport of bicycles and electric-powered van. It is popular with small businesses in particular, offering a local service that undercuts Royal Mail. It will be interesting to see whether this niche of the postal industry thrives in the future.

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## Parcel Services

Local directories such as Yellow Pages and Dentons list at least five national courier collection & delivery companies (eg DHL or UPS for parcels) operating in Bath, plus two companies based in Bath, one in Widcombe.

## Charity Mail

A limited Xmas card service run by the Weston Scout Troop, covering Weston and Newbridge during the second and third weeks of December last year, provided cheap competition to Royal Mail; there is an opportunity for such a service to be operated by a charity in Widcombe.

Residents in Widcombe have a wide range of services, matching most towns. One missing local service which would contribute to Widcombe being more 'self-sufficient' is a Post Office, often a social 'focal point' in a shopping parade. The business model of most new or reorganised Post Offices commonly requires the sharing of premises with, say, a supermarket or newsagent, such as McColl's have done on Bear Flat and Moorland Road.

## NEED – PARTLY MET

d) Availability of TV and Radio?

## Television and Radio

The broadcasting industry has been remarkable for its continuing changing face due to technical innovations and to the precarious commercial status of the media business. The information below cannot give the whole picture (!) and may already be out of date.

## Terrestrial Broadcasting

The most powerful broadcasting transmitter in the West Country, the Mendip Transmitter, is situated just north of Wells. The 300 m high mast was built in 1967 and is now owned by *Arqiva*. It is a 'C/D Group' transmitter serving a population of around 1½ million, including parts of Bath. Despite its power, a total of 54 'repeater' transmitters are needed to provide good reception in hilly areas out of 'line of sight' of the Mendip mast.

The 'shadow' caused by the hills to the south of Bath means that most of the city centre and, particularly, areas on north-facing slopes like Widcombe receive terrestrial transmissions from the Bath Transmitter on Bathampton Down. This local *Arqiva* transmitter serves about 24,000 homes by rebroadcasting signals it receives from Mendip and from Wenvoe (Cardiff). The range of transmissions from the Bath mast is impressive: digital TV, BBC national and local radio, local radio such as *Heart* and *Breeze* (Bath); UHF TV, local FM radio, national FM radio, *Cellnet*, paging signals, *Vodafone*, *Orange* and other phone services. This transmitter does not broadcast all the commercial channels available from Mendip.

Even with this repeater transmitter the signal can be poor enough to require further signal improvement, such as the active deflector 'self-help' relay in east Claverton which serves just 40 houses.

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The Bath transmitter is very reliable but not immune to failure, apart from engineering works which may cause temporary disruption; significant transmission interruptions have occurred in July 2012 and, worryingly, in January 2013 when an arson attack caused serious damage. Society's increasing reliance on digital communications of all sorts may demand that such transmission facilities are more resistant to attack.

### Local Radio Broadcasting Services

Radio programmes are broadcast on LW (2020-1058m), MW (570-187 m) and VHF/FM (3.4-2.8 m) wavelengths, received by most traditional radio sets, plus the relatively new digital DAB (1.7-1.3 m). Short wave broadcasting is little used in the UK. All BBC national stations are also broadcast via: Freeview (TV) satellite, cable and the internet. Despite encouragement by the BBC, many people have resisted buying new (and expensive) DAB radios; accordingly, the threat to replace local FM services with DAB broadcasts has been deferred, although the BBC said that it was never policy to replace national FM services.

The BBC initiative to promote local broadcasting has slowed, such that the remaining services received in Bath comprise: *Radio Bristol* on 104.6 FM, *Radio Somerset* on 95.5 FM (1566 MW) and *Radio Wiltshire* on 104.3 FM (1332 MW).

Independent local radio stations include *Heart*, *Breeze* and *Smooth*, plus *University Radio Bath*.

*The Breeze* is an independent network of local radio stations owned by *Celador Radio*, playing popular music aimed at listeners over 40, broadcast in Bath on 107.9 FM. It has about a 4% audience share with a local studio in Bristol.

*Heart* (earlier GWR FM) serves Bristol and surroundings as *Heart West Country* and is broadcast in Bath on 103 FM, on DAB digital radio and online. *Heart* is owned by *Global Radio* (owners of *Classic FM* and several other radio and TV stations) and earlier had an audience share of 13%, targeting an audience of 25-45 year olds with popular music from the 1970s to 2000s.

The only Bath-based broadcasting studios are those of *1449AM URB*, the radio station run by the students of Bath University, providing a mix of news, speech, drama and music. Broadcasts are on local MW, online and via mobile.

### Satellite Transmissions

The hilly local terrain and the popularity of pay-to-view content has seen a rapid increase in the use of satellite broadcasting and the associated sprouting of rooftop dishes on Widcombe properties, except where specifically prohibited.

Probably the most popular providers are *Sky* with 11 million customers, which sells a number of entertainment and sport content packages and *Freesat* (a joint venture between the BBC and ITV) which provides a range of free-to-view digital TV and radio channels (as an alternative to the *Freeview* digital TV and radio terrestrial service).

Both *Sky* and *Freesat* use the same satellites for broadcasting: the *Astra* satellites at 28.2E and *Eutelsat* at 28.5E; however, some properties are unable to receive satellite transmissions where the satellite signal is obscured by hills, buildings or trees (eg *Calton Gardens*).

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## Cable Communications

*Virgin* cable services are available in some areas of Bath via the telephone exchange (see above).

## Internet Transmissions

Just about all radio and television broadcasting, from the UK and abroad, can be accessed via an internet connection for consumption at home or by any enabled mobile device.

## NEED – PARTLY MET

f) Are there local newspapers and journals?

## NEWSPAPERS

### National and International Newspapers

Most national newspapers are obtainable from shops on Widcombe Parade, namely McColl's and Morrisons. McColl's has an additional choice of news, entertainment and hobby journals.

International papers and journals are sold by W H Smith in Bath centre.

### Local Newspapers

Newspapers specialising in local news are: the *Bath Chronicle* and the *Western Daily Press*.

The *Bath Chronicle* is based in Bath and was first published in 1760, being sold under various titles as a daily paper until 2007 when it changed to being a weekly tabloid. It is owned by *Local World*, a publisher of about 100 regional papers and has a circulation of just over 14,000 copies. B&NES Council uses local newspapers like the *Chronicle* for the publication of certain statutory notices such as those required under highways, planning and electoral regulations.

The *Western Daily Press*, also owned by *Local World* is a daily paper based in Bristol, having a circulation of about 26,000; it reports particularly on rural news stories throughout the West Country.

The printed editions of local newspapers are still used by members of the community for legal notices, for birth, marriage and death announcements and for small advertisements, which are published along with the traditional local news items, sports and arts news and a large section on property for sale and rent.

Both newspapers have highly developed, advertisement-driven, websites that provide most of the printed version contents, including public and legal notices. They have the added advantage of being able to display up to date information such as traffic and weather conditions. Their content of highly irritating and computer-slowng advertising does nothing to attract a greater online readership!

A newcomer to Bath's online news service is *Bath Echo*, formerly *Now Bath*, produced by Media Bath Ltd, the company set up by Sebastian Hawker last year. Like a lot of online information,

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there is no attribution as to the source of much of the information carried, so the content should be viewed with caution.

NEED – MET

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The 'provisioning' table now looks like this:

Need	Sub-needs	Met/Not Met/Partly Met?
<b>1. Food</b>		
	a) Buying our food?	Met
	b) Growing our food?	Partly Met
	c) Foraging for food?	Partly Met
	d) Restaurant or takeaway?	Met
<b>2. Shelter</b>		
	a) Is there sufficient housing for the population?	Partly Met
	b) Is this housing of a range of types?	Partly Met
	c) Can we find builders, plumbers, etc?	Met
<b>3. Energy for warmth</b>		
	a) Is there a source of gas for heating?	Met
	b) Are there possibilities of other fuels for heating – coal, wood, oil, electricity..?	Met
	c) Can we find help to insulate our homes to reduce need for heat?	Partly Met
<b>4. Energy-electricity</b>		
	a) Is there a reliable source of mains electricity?	Partly Met
	b) Can suppliers be found for generating own electricity?	Met
<b>5. Water</b>		
	a) Is there an adequate supply of clean potable water?	Met
<b>6. Transport, or Getting Around</b>		
	a) Access to bus services?	Partly Met
	b) Access to rail services?	Met
	c) Are pedestrians well catered?	Partly Met
	d) Do cycle services exist, e.g. to buy, rent, repair etc, and dedicated or shared cycle lanes.	Partly Met
	e) Is there an efficient road network with parking?	Met
<b>7. Waste Disposal</b>		
	a) Is there recycling of most materials (paper, glass, metals, plastics)?	Partly Met
	b) Is there disposal of residual waste?	Met
	c) Disposal of larger items?	Met
	d) Sewage disposal?	Met
<b>8. Health</b>		
	a) Primary healthcare (GP) available?	Met
	b) Dentistry services?	Met
	c) Pharmaceutical supplier?	Met
	d) Hospital services inc A&E	Met
	e) Supplementary service e.g. chiropody	Met
<b>9. Education</b>		

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	a) Pre-school provision?	Met
	b) Primary school provision?	Met
	c) Secondary school provision?	Met
	d) Post-school education/training?	Met
<b>10. The Environment</b>		
	a) Air quality inc smells	Not Met
	b) Freedom from noise	Partly Met
	c) Surface water (streams and rivers)	Met
	d) Wildlife	Partly Met
<b>11. Community Safety</b>		
	a) Is there law enforcement visible and active at a local level?	Partly Met
	b) Can we call on higher-level policing when needed?	Partly Met
	c) Is justice visibly dispensed?	Met
	d) Is there a responsive Fire and Rescue service within reasonable reach?	Met
<b>12. Culture, Entertainment and Exercise</b>		
	a) Access to theatre/music/cinema?	Met
	b) Opportunities to socialise outside the home?	Met
	c) Opportunities to do sport or exercise vigorously or swim?	Met
	d) Opportunities for mild exercise in the open air?	Met
	e) Opportunities to enjoy Nature?	Met
	f) Opportunities to enjoy the Built Environment?	Met
<b>13. Religion</b>		
	a) Access to places of worship according to the nature of your religion?	Met
<b>14. Communications</b>		
	a) Is there good voice telephone (land/mobile) service?	Met
	b) Is there good broadband service?	Partly Met
	c) Are there postal services?	Partly Met
	d) Is there access to TV and Radio?	Partly Met
	e) Are there local newspapers and journals?	Met

## SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING WIDCOMBE'S SUSTAINABILITY

This is the point at which we look further at only those Needs which are considered Not Met or Partly Met, and try to come up with ideas for making them better met.

**For 1.b) 'Growing our Food'**, our suggestions are:

1. Given the apparent shortage of allotment spaces the council might be pressed to consider more spaces or better use of the existing spaces. It could be hard to find room to put new allotment spaces within the Widcombe catchment area, and then it would be necessary to find the money/resource to do it. It could be worth talking to the Allotment Association about this. The other route along this line is to make better use of existing allotment spaces, which might be achieved by ensuring that neglected plots are brought back into cultivation once the reason for the neglect is understood, Another possibility is to consider reducing the size of the larger plots e.g. by dividing them into two which could be let to two different people. The problem with all of the above ideas is that they depend heavily on the Council prioritising allotments and the effective administration of them. The signs are not good that this is a Council priority.
2. Another possibility, and one which is more in the gift of the Widcombe Association, is to consider creating a local GardenShare scheme. This would need an enthusiastic person to publicise and then run it.
3. Unused patches of public land could be identified and then, with the Council's blessing, be made over to be guerrilla gardens. The only parcel of land I can think of where this might be tried is on Calton Rd, though there are apparently already plans for some kind of small community orchard.

**For 1.c) 'Foraging for Food'**, a suggestion is:

1. For some interested and responsible person to be found who could write a guide to the what and when of foraging in Widcombe. Subjects might include wild garlic leaves, apples, blackberries, nuts and mushrooms. It appears we already have an expert on this within Widcombe – Nathaniel Cross!

**For 2.a) 'Is there Sufficient Housing for the Population'** suggestions come in this form:

Our 'Widcombe' area comprises two distinct areas: the eastern side with period houses fingering into the surrounding combs, rich in wildlife and history, and the western side with dense terraced housing, little green space and the legacy of commerce and industry. It is interesting to remember that the now 'up market' area around Widcombe Parade thronged with the grime of transport and trade long before the development west along the Avon valley.

There is very little land available in Widcombe for significant additional residential housing. Minor additions could be made by redeveloping existing low density housing, eg replacing a Georgian villa set in a large garden with multi-storey apartments, but planning restrictions are unlikely to allow that. So expansion is likely to be restricted to the western area, such as *Pinesgate* and other areas currently occupied by offices, should the provision of housing be more attractive to developers than the commercial alternatives.

Housing that otherwise might have naturally become available for local people, or those moving to Widcombe because of jobs, has been taken out of the market in order to accommodate students, in

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some parts of Widcombe to an overwhelming extent. Students don't need to live in 'family' houses (see comment below) and are more suited (judging by their behaviour where I live) to halls of residence, preferably on campus.

1. Further expansion in student numbers should be restricted in relation to the accommodation available, both on campus and in the town.
2. Owners should be 'encouraged' to put back into use all unoccupied property wherever possible. It is noted that the Council does provide an 'empty property' service where empty properties can be reported.

**For 2.b) 'Is There a Range of Housing Types?'** the suggestion emerging is:

The Widcombe area has little 'family friendly' housing readily available, (say, three/four bedrooms, garden for playing and planting, well-appointed and energy efficient) as much of such housing has been acquired for multi-occupancy students and the cost of these houses is high. Many of the terraced areas have smallish houses with tiny, if any, gardens, unsuited particularly for young families. Until the pressure for student accommodation is lessened, there is little that can be done within Widcombe to redress the scarcity of family homes.

Equally, in the current housing stock there are few houses suitable for the expanding numbers of old, infirm or disabled residents unless significant and expensive modifications are made.

1. Planning policy should prevent the 'ghettoization' of housing areas in order to maintain a healthy balance of all sectors of the community; student dormitories do little to sustain community spirit in the longer term.

**For 3. c) 'Can we find help to insulate our homes to reduce need for heat?'** we have these suggestions:

BANES Sustainability Dept. The Community Sustainability Officer provides excellent advice and support, in particular for the BANES "Energy at home" programme. This programme provides grants for residents wanting to make energy efficient improvements to their homes. Some residents have experienced bureaucratic barriers with the programme though the Sustainability Team have worked hard to remove these.

1. Written request from WA sustainability group to Manager of BANES Sustainability Dept. asking the following: i) How are they appraising the Energy at home programme? ii) Do they have user/client feedback on ease of application for grants? and iii) Were clients given information on alternative sources of funding?

Planning permission for PV roof panels and sash windows remains limited or impossible for listed buildings. Wall insulation for the older houses in Widcombe is limited due to planning restrictions (World Heritage site / Conservation area / Listed buildings).

2. Initiate discussion with B&NES Planning Policy unit and Bath Preservation Trust about freeing up planning restrictions, and even encouraging 'Best Available Technology Not Entailing Excessive Costs' (BATNEEC) energy efficiency measures for new build as well as for 'replacement' works, eg photovoltaic panels, as it is so much more cost-effectively done at the build stage.

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**For 4. a) 'Is there a reliable source of mains electricity?'** the suggestion that came through is:

1. Encouraging as many homeowners as possible to switch to suppliers that include renewable sources. This is a constantly changing scene so it may prove hard to keep up to date. For example, Bath and West Community Energy are currently just formulating a plan to enable homeowners to purchase its renewable electricity direct.

**For 6.a) 'Access to bus services'**, the only specific suggestion which came up is:

1. Discuss the potential need for additional bus capacity on the existing routes with Ralph Allen PTA. If necessary, then consider how best to campaign for improvements to the service. Anecdotal evidence from parents suggests there is a regular bus service but it is too busy for some students to use on the way home.

**For 6. c) 'Are pedestrians well catered?'** we have the suggestions:

1. See Rossiter Road Scheme updates re courtesy street, crossings at junction with bottom of Widcombe Hill and Ralph Allen Drive.
2. Continue campaign for improvements to subway under A36/Claverton St.

**For 6.d) 'Do cycle services exist?'** it is noted that there is a 'better cycling' group in the 'Improving Widcombe' initiative, so suggestions are being left to them.

**For 7.a) 'Is there recycling of most materials?'** we suggest:

1. Providing street litter bins that allow segregation facilities (see photo), assuming that B&NES has the capacity to deal with collecting the various materials.
2. Running a 'Keep Widcombe Tidy' campaign that would engage all those living or running a business in Widcombe.
3. Providing facilities in addition to the recycling centres for the deposition of certain materials by the public (e.g. bins for glass, plastics, cans, etc) to overcome the disincentive to drive across town to the single council facility. Finding a location(s) for such facilities will be tricky; supermarkets that once had bottle/paper banks now shy away from having them for two reasons: first they say that the council collection scheme offers better recycling opportunities, secondly, they get fed up with having to pay for clearing up dumped materials like fridges, mattresses and particularly builders' rubble, now that rules for commercial waste disposal have tightened.
4. Encouraging traders to improve their waste management practises – could Widcombe or B&NES operate a 'Waste Champion' type scheme that publicly recognises and rewards good performance? A wider scope, auditable 'environment performance' scheme (including energy, conservation, etc) including recycling, could be established.
5. Making greater efforts to 'educate' all landlords, agents, householders, particularly students and certain residents about the rules for waste management and the possible fines for non-compliance. A 'waste awareness' campaign illustrating the detailed costs and problems of waste disposal could be run by B&NES with the help of neighbourhood groups. Once the Council



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receives waste materials, their management and disposal are well organised – the weak link in the chain is that between waste producer and the collection service.

6. Asking B&NES to operate a more publicised enforcement policy against offenders and fly-tippers. The B&NES waste education team is seen around the region, providing information and encouragement to the public, but perhaps more stick to go with the carrot would help.

**For 10.a) 'Air Quality Including smells' we have:**

Preventative measure to reduce emissions at source:

1. Additional monitoring and publication of Air Quality data would help to inform decisions about the most appropriate measures to take to address the issue. This potentially includes monitoring PM levels as well as NO<sub>2</sub>. Information on high emissions concentrations in Widcombe could be more widely publicised to increase public awareness and assist individuals to take their part in improving the situation – i.e. fewer car journeys, no idling outside school.
2. Work with local schools to encourage more sustainable forms of transport and limit availability of temporary parking permits at drop off and pick up times. Schools and their PTAs could facilitate additional cycle/scooter parking, provision of walking buses such as [www.crocodile.org.uk](http://www.crocodile.org.uk) and car sharing schemes.
3. Suggest supporting the campaign for a Low Emission Zone (LEZ) for Bath which includes the A36 and also for an A46/36 link road to reduce the volume of heavy through traffic within the city. A LEZ is a geographically defined area where the most polluting of vehicles are restricted, deterred or discouraged from access and use. The aim is to reduce the use and number of more polluting vehicles in a particular area by setting specific emission standards or criteria (Defra, 2009b). A feasibility study for a LEZ in Bath was carried out in 2014. More information can be found on the BANES website at <http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/environment/pollution/air-quality/lez-study>
4. Review available traffic data for Widcombe with a view to understanding traffic origin and destination by type. This could help to understand if weight limits to discourage heavy through traffic from the A36 in Widcombe would reduce traffic and therefore both excess noise and emissions.
5. Campaign for multi operator bus passes and more affordable bus services to encourage people out of their cars (for example, it should not be cheaper to park at RUH for an outpatients appointment than it is to get the bus).
6. Encourage B&NES to assist in the formation of 'Taxi buses' to limit the number of private cars on the road. These are timetabled services which make use of taxis rather than traditional buses to provide additional short routes where there is an identifiable need. For example, if hills are a problem in Widcombe a scheduled taxi minibus could be used to take people to the top. This is a particular problem at peak school time where children are less able to walk home uphill or for others less physically able.

Other measures:

7. As trees can absorb harmful emissions, discourage the removal of trees in planning consents.
8. Promote the planting of shrubs (hedges) which can often provide good and dense buffering, particularly at child level, from traffic fumes.
9. Work with restaurants and environmental health to reduce smells from restaurants at Brunel Square.

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**For 10.b) 'Freedom from Noise' we have:**

1. See 10 a) recommendation 4.
2. Review of Rossiter Road Scheme to cover possible changes to traffic signals to allow emergency vehicles through while other traffic is halted on red lights in all directions.

**For 11.a) 'Is there law enforcement visible and active at a local level?' we have:**

1. Police visibility needs to be higher – could Widcombe have a 'drop-in' location where local policing matters could be discussed (there's no 'police station' where this can be done now)?
2. Bath centre is well covered by CCTV – would parts of Widcombe benefit from this technology? Only a small part of Widcombe could be covered, e.g. Widcombe Parade, but that may be the area most blighted by anti-social crimes.
3. If they haven't already got one, should the Widcombe Association have a member with specific responsibilities for police liaison and community affairs, along with elected councillors?

Suggestions that apply to Bath – but which would affect Widcombe:

4. The police enquiry office needs much higher visibility signage.
5. Police activities need a much higher positive public profile and sense of public engagement.



**For 11.b) 'Can we call on higher-level policing when needed?' we have:**

1. The anonymous police centre stuck behind a car show room is inappropriate for a city of the size and fame of Bath and should provide a range of police services deserved by such a busy, internationally recognised place. A city police station should have 24/7 comprehensive first response capability and be far more welcoming to the general public.

Community Safety – Supplementary Items

Two law enforcement activities that are more frequently seen around Widcombe, but not previously considered, are those of traffic wardens and speed checks; both have an impact on safety. Inconsiderate parking by users of the community centre in St Mark's Road, where residents are campaigning to have parking restrictions similar to neighbouring residential areas of Bath, and speeding vehicles coming down Ralph Allen Drive into Prior Park Road are recurring problems that would benefit from increased monitoring.

**For 14.b) 'Is there good broadband service?' we have:**

Currently some of the attractive ultra-high speed broadband deals being offered (eg TalkTalk) are simply not available to parts of Bath (BA2 area for one). Customers will have to wait until the fibre upgrade is rolled out. Even then, the likely costs will be too high for those on a limited income.

1. Is a publicly accessible internet cafe with high speed broadband viable in Widcombe, such as in the new social club?
2. A lot of official documentation is now only available on the internet and has to be downloaded (eg the range of forms required for IHT and Granting of Probate); would access to a computer terminal and printing facilities in Widcombe on a pay-to use basis be workable?
3. All new houses should have 'street cabinet to house' fibre connections (not the old copper cable BT still provide), thus removing a major obstacle to slow internet performance.

The latest study by a cross-party group of MPs led by Grant Shapps, is highly critical of BT's performance in installing the high speed broadband infrastructure and has called for BT to be split from *Openreach*; however, facts and figures used in the enquiry report have been widely criticised as being wrong, but that's not likely to hinder the call for privatisation by Mr Shapps and his fellow travellers.

**For 14.c) 'Are there postal services?' we have:**

1. A sub-Post Office in Widcombe, even part-time, would be welcomed by many, but its economic viability would have to be justified before any third party involved (eg shop owner) would be likely to entertain the idea. (In Milton Ernest, Beds., the village post office is in the garden centre and is immensely popular).
2. If a full time sub-Post Office is not viable, a Xmas period temporary parcel post 'counter' would be much more convenient than the scrum that occurs at the main Post Office (the only level walk to a P.O. from Widcombe) during December?

## Sustainable Widcombe

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- 3 Parcel deliveries from internet shopping are on the increase, yet the performance of several of the national delivery services is far from satisfactory. *Amazon* operates a 'local pick-up' service at a number of locations in Widcombe. Perhaps other online suppliers will try to match this initiative, over and above the widespread 'in store' collection offered by the websites of large retailers like *Boots* and *M & S*. For people out at work all day, local collection point(s) that are open outside normal business hours offer a welcome service.

**For 14.d) 'Is there access to TV and Radio?' we have:**

- 1 The cost of DAB radios remains relatively high (both to buy and run). For those on low income and who depend on 'radio company' a scheme to recycle/repair unwanted DAB radios locally might be beneficial. (Some charity electrical repair schemes have been set up elsewhere).
- 2 Similarly, for those on low income living where radio or TV reception is poor, a local scheme to provide signal-boosting equipment might be beneficial. In some area of Widcombe satellite reception is the only way of receiving a good signal, in others even a satellite signal is not achievable.

Additional point on 'Communications' – in its broader sense

At the inaugural *Improving Widcombe* meeting, Paddy Doyle spoke of Widcombe as having, or aspiring to have, a 'village' feel. One of the attributes of a thriving village is the hub of the village hall that acts as a focus for most community affairs. Widcombe has plenty of activities and plenty of venues at which they are held; these include: coffee bars, pubs, St Mark's Community Centre, the Garden Centre, Church Halls and the recently opened Social Club. Perhaps this diversity of resources inadvertently fragments community communications, so that further efforts by community groups and societies to share information and opportunities for participation would help towards achieving the 'one village' feel.

# Sustainable Widcombe

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## ADDENDUM on Defining Sustainability (and Widcombe)

'Sustainability' is a word that is hard to avoid these days, and having a general cachet of 'goodness' it tends to get attached to all sorts of ideas. For example, the current Core Strategy for B&NES Council in its Foreword says, "*(The Core Strategy) will help us to secure a sustainable future...(it) places great emphasis on the different places that make up B&NES, responding to and reflecting their particular characteristics and local distinctiveness. It sets out a clear framework to enable their development needs to be met sustainably and in a way that reflects their specific qualities.*" The same word turns up in different forms throughout the same document.

However, we are also conscious that its real meaning has got debased to the point where it has become almost devoid of meaning. Having proposed at the first 'Improving Widcombe' in January 2015 that it would be good to consider making Widcombe 'more sustainable' we were deliberately setting a challenge for ourselves, namely to try to define what the word means in the context of a small suburb in a small city, and then answer the question which we set – namely what if any ways can be considered to make Widcombe more sustainable?

## Definitions of Sustainability (and 'Widcombe')

Start with definition of Sustainable Development as arrived at by the Brundtland Commission of the United Nations in 1987 - "*sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*" This is the most common understanding of the term.

This is a '*temporal*' definition of sustainability. Looking round for examples where this kind of sustainability has been violated, the first one to think of is fishing, especially cod-fishing in the Atlantic where the formerly extensive stocks were so effectively exploited that the species has effectively been wiped out. Here, a resource (cod) has been exhausted by a former generation to the detriment of all following generations. Closer to home, the EU is making efforts to ensure that fish stocks around the North Sea and Atlantic are managed in a sustainable way, which means ensuring that current catches being taken do not jeopardise the ability of future generations to enjoy the stock which remains.

Arguably the biggest example of the need to think sustainably is over man's exploitation of the earth's oil and gas reserves. These are finite (albeit large and new sources are still being found) and one day will run out. With these hydrocarbon fuels there is additionally the issue of their exploitation leading to irreversible climate change. This presents a further compelling reason to progressively reduce our use of and dependence on fossil fuels which are currently our main source of energy for warmth, electrical power, transport for both ourselves and many of the products on which current life depends.

Thus (we think) has emerged a new basis for defining sustainability, namely '*spatial*' where goodness is characterised by a low dependence on motorised transport. For two quick examples, we can agree that walking is more sustainable than taking a car, and food with low 'food miles' is more sustainable than food that has to be brought long distances before it reaches us.

# Sustainable Widcombe

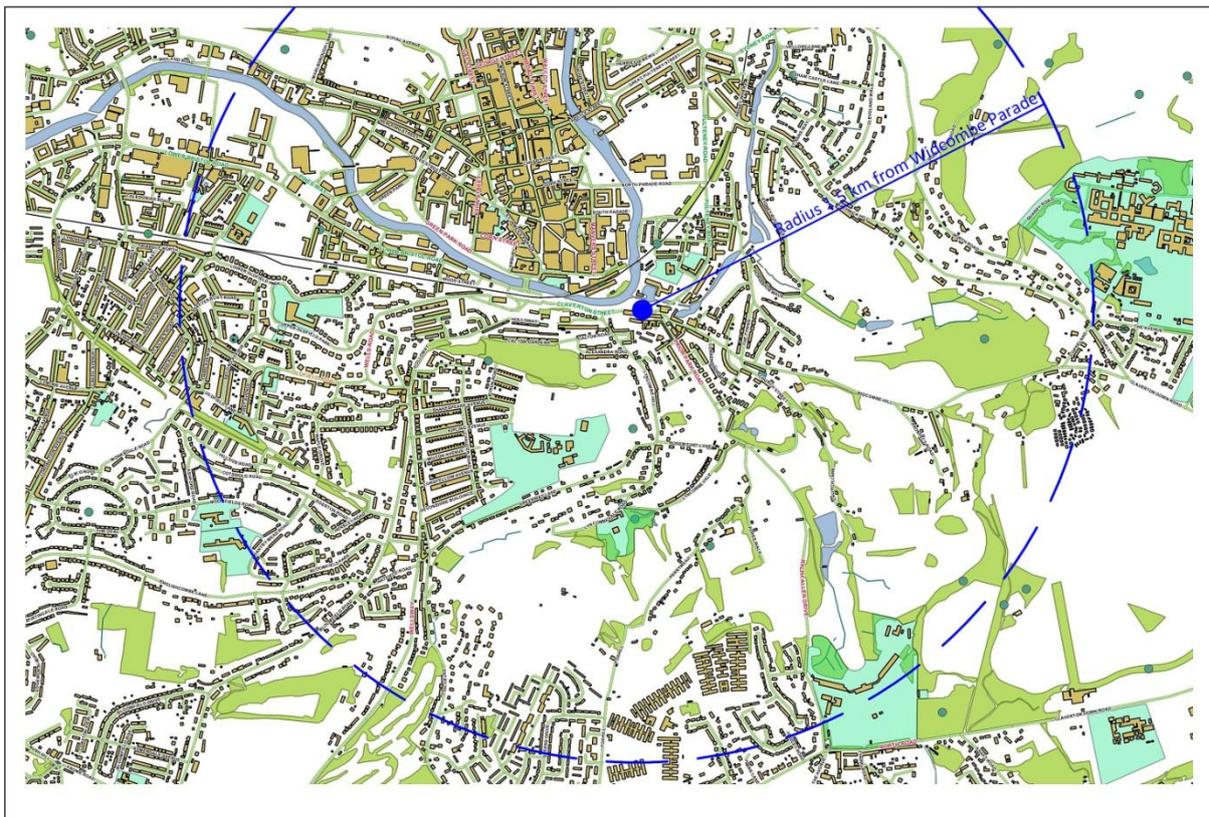
Another definition of sustainability might be termed '*financial*', where an initiative is only sustainable if the cash coming in to deliver the initiative at least matches over a foreseeable period the cash need to service it.

Underlying all definitions arguably is the '*environmental*' definition, where an activity is only sustainable if the great regulator, Nature, is kept in balance in terms of soil, air quality, water, and biodiversity. Arguably all human activity will fail if Nature is not kept in reasonable balance, while recognising that over long periods of time Nature will adjust itself to perturbations of various kinds.

All these forms of sustainability are to some extent or other interlinked, but it is on basis of spatial sustainability that we try to answer the question – what can we do to make Widcombe more sustainable? It will combine elements of spatial sustainability i.e. walking/cycling is preferable to use of the car, with temporal sustainability.

As for how to define 'Widcombe', we would suggest we think in terms of places that can be reached within approx 20 minutes walk (i.e. about 1.5 km or 1 mile) of Widcombe Parade. Obviously this circle reaches over the river into Bath city centre, but then we can talk about places 'accessible from' Widcombe.

MAP OF AREA WITHIN 1.5 km FROM THE CENTRE OF WIDCOMBE PARADE



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