

The Wells Community Vision and Plan

Introduction – Cllr John Osman

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Introduction

This document lays out a new approach to community planning for the city. Its objective is to enable members of the community to have a say in:

- A. How they view Wells now
- B. What they want for Wells immediately (5 Years)
- C. What they want for Wells in the medium term (10 years)
- D. What they want for Wells in the long term (20 Years).

To develop the Wells Community Vision and Plan a series of consultations have already taken place. These have included a general public consultation, a youth consultation, a traders' consultation and interviews with key personnel within the city. In addition to these consultations the Vision for Wells Group has used the results of Mendip District Council's Great Cake of Life survey, Mendip District Council's Local Development Framework consultations, the Strategy for Wells consultation undertaken by Julian Mellor of 2MD Regeneration, Somerset County Council's youth survey and Centros' surveys on retail expansion within Wells.

The results presented in the Community Vision and Plan are based on residents' opinions and comments, most notably those obtained during a meeting held at Wells City Hall on September 16, 2006 when 350 people were consulted. A majority of market traders were also surveyed through the good offices of the Wells Chamber of Commerce.

I also brought together a group of representatives from the local schools, local organisations and local authorities.

The Wells City Plan Team

Chairman John Osman
Treasurer Netta Meadows
Committee Patrick Brown; Elizabeth Cairncross; Bima Clarke;
Sylvia Clarke; Emma Dance; Simon Davies; Steve Jackson; John
North; John Roberts; Simon Selby; Marion Shaw; Dominique Swain.

As volunteers, our time was given freely. However, the costs of the consultations and producing the initial plan has been covered by grants from the Community Council for Somerset, Somerset County Council, Mendip District Council and Wells City Council.

Further consultation will ensure that the final plan can reflect the interests of all those concerned and have realistic objectives and practical outcomes. In conclusion, this Community Plan will become a statement of where we are as a city with a set of principles to guide

the future. Copies of the Wells Community Vision and Plan will be distributed to Wells City Council, Mendip District Council, Somerset County Council, Avon and Somerset Constabulary and the Government of the South West, all of which are obliged to note our findings.

John Osman - County Councillor for Wells

Part A. Executive summary

1. The City of Wells

Wells is the jewel in Somerset's crown. It is the only city in the county and the smallest city in England.

The Inheritance

With a long and rich heritage Wells attracts recognition from all over the world and thousands of people visit its Cathedral, the Bishop's Palace and Vicars' Close.

In addition to these internationally-recognised sites, the city has an abundance of listed buildings and top-quality architecture including St Cuthbert's Church and the Liberty. Not only do its permanent structures make Wells stand apart from its neighbours, the local markets on Wednesday (Farmers' Market) and Saturday are also recognised throughout the Mendip district.

Wells has a strong and vibrant community. Residents of Wells are committed to protecting the heritage of the city but also realise that the city must move forward if it is to do more than trade on its past. Too great a reliance and focus on the past leaves Wells vulnerable to the present.

The city has a population of approximately 10,400 people and is the third largest settlement in the Mendip area. Wells has the highest proportion of people aged over 65 in the district, which make up 25% of its population. The city also has the lowest proportion of working-age people in the district.

Generally the city's residents enjoy a good standard of living. However, there are pockets of minor deprivation which the relevant local authorities are attempting to address.

The Future

To secure a viable future, Wells needs to have a strong sense of where it is going and how to get there. All-powerful market forces that change consumer behaviour, determine property values and lead investment will have an unpredictable impact on the city if it fails to agree on common goals.

The city has long traded on the quality of its heritage and environment and now needs a vision if it is to move forward in well-managed and strategic ways. For Wells to flourish in the future it need a plan and a community consensus of support for this plan. The consensus must bring together residents, groups, businesses and institutions for without it there

is a high risk that vocal and articulate voices will challenge, criticise, redirect and frustrate efforts to find a future course. In so doing, the destiny of Wells will once again be abandoned and allowed to fall into the hands of major market and even global forces that will have free rein to determine where and how any investment or money is spent.

2. A Community Vision and Plan for Wells

This Community Plan aims to encapsulate the views of residents and looks to enhance their quality of life and develop the city by:

- A. Establishing criteria for planning for the future;
- B. Negotiating with the various tiers of local government and government agencies;
- C. Leveraging investment from public and private sources;
- D. Producing a yardstick to evaluate and to measure the success of local initiatives.

Part B Where we are as a City

3. Population and Housing

What we know

House prices in Wells are significantly higher (30% to 40%) than the national average, however wages in the city are considerably lower than the national average (£20,000 per annum in Wells compared with £23,000 nationally).

There have been substantial housing developments in all Mendip towns over the last 10 years, except Wells. This is solely because the space available for development is limited.

Given the high land and housing costs within the city and the lack of housing developments, affordable housing development has been limited and small scale.

The Local Development Framework envisages 950 new homes being built in the Wells area in the next 20 years. The majority of these homes will be built in the city, however 240 homes will need to be built on the edge of the city.

For more information, see appendix 15.

What we asked

A) What are the perceived barriers to living in Wells?

B) Where would you like to see more homes in the community?

What we were told

A) The perceived barriers to living in Wells are:-

- Owing to high house prices Wells is not attractive to young people.
- Owing to a lack of job opportunities Wells is not attractive to young people.
- Wells needs more social housing, starter homes and shared-equity homes.
- New homes need to be of a high standard and blend in with the City.

B) Where would you like to see more homes in the community?

12% of respondents believe there should be more homes above the:

- High Street
- Queens Street
- The Market Place
- Sadler Street
- Broad Street

88% of respondents say new housing developments should be considered at

- Nutricia (Glastonbury Road) 30%
- Gate Lane (East Somerset Way) 23%
- Clare's (East Somerset Way) 21%
- Thales (Wookey Hole Road) 8%
- Ash Lane (In the land between Old Bristol Road and Milton Lane) 3%
- Bath Road (In the land near Churchill Road East) 3%

Conclusion

Owing to high house prices and the lack of job opportunities there are barriers which make it difficult for young people and working people to obtain housing within the city.

Generating more affordable housing in the city is a priority as there is a significant shortage

To keep young local people in the city the points criteria used to allocate affordable social housing should be adjusted to give these people priority when a home in Wells becomes available.

Consideration should be given by the public to appropriate housing developments outside the city limits.

4. Education and Young People

What we know

Wells is well served by one infant, three junior, one primary and two secondary schools. All of the schools are rated satisfactory to very good by Ofsted and education attainment is generally good. The young people of Wells have a youth centre, a skatepark and a number of sports clubs. The current activities only serve a minority of young people in the city and there is a identified need for new and improved facilities. For more information, see appendix 16.

What we asked

- A) What new activities would you like to see in Wells?
- B) What improvements would you like to see to current activities?
- C) How do young people rate education and youth provision?
- D) Why should young people leave or stay in Wells?

What we were told

A) What new activities would you like to see in Wells?

Ice Skating Rink - 24%	U18s nightclub - 10%	BMX track - 5%
Ten Pin Bowling - 22%	New cinema - 10%	Dance club - 3%
McDonalds - 18%	Parkour - 5%	Youth shelter - 3%

B) What improvements would you like to see to current activities?

Cinema - 30%	Skatepark - 10%	Youth Centre - 2%
The high street - 25%	Sports Ground - 6%	Leisure Centre - 1%
Swimming pool - 20%	The toilets - 6%	

C) How do young people rate education and youth provision?

	Very Poor	Poor	Avr	Good	Very Good
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The education you receive at school	5%	5%	55%	45%	0%
The state of the school buildings	40%	10%	40%	10%	0%
The equipment you use at school	40%	25%	25%	5%	5%
Extended school services	65%	9%	26%	0%	0%
School holiday activities	55%	45%	10%	0%	0%
The youth centre	0%	0%	5%	45%	50%
The activities at the youth centre	10%	0%	28%	38%	21%
Advice on sex education	16%	24%	24%	24%	12%
Advice on drugs	18%	16%	24%	24%	18%

D) Why should young people leave or stay in Wells?

Why Leave	Why Stay
Nothing to do	Nice people
Lack of jobs	Nice churches
Wells is expensive	Good environment
Not enough shops	Family links
Nothing to do at night	Plenty of jobs (contradictory)
Nothing to do in school holidays	Cheap housing (contradictory)
Too many over 30s	Good further education
Too many OAPs	The cathedral
Too many tourists	Open spaces
High house prices	Leisure centre
Not enough affordable houses	Low crime
Transport (buses and taxis) too expensive	Good sports clubs
	Carnival and fairs

Conclusion

In relation to new activities, young people would like to see an ice rink, 10 pin bowling or a fast food outlet come into Wells. It would be realistic to assume that if such a facility were commercially viable, it would have been provided long ago. Only one project on this scale might be able to proceed in the near future. Given these commercial constraints, the young people of Wells would need to be consulted on what they might hope that one project should be.

In relation to improving existing activities young people would like to see the cinema, the High Street and the swimming pool improved.

In relation to education young people generally believe they receive an average-to- good education. It is concerning that they feel that the

state of school buildings and the equipment they use at school is rated as very poor to poor.

Somerset County Council should be contacted to request that temporary classrooms be removed and replaced as soon as possible. In the longer term Wells should be put forward for the Schools for the Future Scheme, which seeks to renovate and rebuild school premises. The scheme could take some 10 to 20 years to come to fruition.

5. Retail and Commerce

What we know

The city of Wells has a good range of shops. At the time of this consultation there were 175 shops which are a mix between national and independent retailers. The High Street is struggling, however, and there is concern about the number of empty shops and charity shops. The medieval street pattern does not allow rear access to retail units in the High Street so deliveries will always be difficult.

The economy of Wells grew by 9% between 1998 and 2004 in terms of jobs and income. However since 2004 the city has lost two major employers with the closure of Nutricia and Clare's. The decline in the city's industries has been partially offset by the increase in white-collar employment opportunities, with a number of new business setting up with between 1 and 10 employees.

For more information, see appendices 17 and 18.

What we asked

A) Pedestrianisation

- i) Do you believe that the city centre should be pedestrianised?
- ii) What effect would pedestrianisation have on traders in the city?

B) What are residents' and traders' views on the future of the High Street?

C) What are residents' and traders' views on the proposed expansion of retail development in the city?

What we were told

A) Pedestrianisation

- i) Do you believe that the city centre should be pedestrianised?

Strongly Disagree

28%

Disagree	23%
No Preference	5%
Agree	20%
Strongly Agree	24%

ii) What effect would pedestrianisation have on traders' business?

Bad for business - 39%	Good for business - 24%
No difference to your business - 35%	Excellent for your business - 2%

B) What are i) residents' and ii) traders' views on the future of the High Street?

i) Residents

Keep the buildings the same and the same types of independent stores	68%
Slowly modernise the buildings and the types of stores	31%
Immediately modernise the High Street and support national stores	1%

ii) Traders

Keep the buildings the same and the same types of independent stores	66%
Slowly modernise the buildings and the types of stores	34%
Immediately modernise the High Street and support national stores	0%

C) What are the views of i) residents and ii) traders on the proposed expansion of retail development in the city submitted by Centros Miller?

i) Residents

Wells councillors received hundreds of letters from Wells residents in relation to the retail development plans. The letters confirmed that Wells residents do not object to the principle of retail development on Princes Road and realise that some development would be better than nothing at all.

However residents will not support a development if:-

- a) Princes Road is closed
- b) Tesco is permitted to expand
- c) The bus station is not as close as possible to the High Street
- d) Nothing is done to alleviate traffic concerns on Tucker Street
- e) The prosperity of the High Street is adversely affected

Wells residents are prepared to wait as long as it takes for the right scheme to be proposed.

Of the young people questioned, 25% wanted to see an improvement in the High Street shops. Additional comments indicated that a majority of Wells youth would like to see a new shopping mall and specifically named major national retailers.

ii) Traders

Bad for business -	56%	Good for business -	18%
No difference to your business -	24%	Excellent for your business -	2%

Conclusion

The argument about pedestrianisation is finely balanced. However, a small majority of residents are against the proposal. A large majority of traders either do not want pedestrianisation or believe that it will make no difference to their business. Previous consultations have also given a negative result.

In relation to the future of the High Street both residents and traders are strongly in favour of preserving the buildings and the same type of stores. Generally speaking they like the heritage, quaint character and independent nature of the shops, especially in Broad Street..

The owners of the buildings in the High Street need to be contacted and persuaded not to let their properties to charity shops or allow the shops to remain empty, as this adversely effects the fabric of the city centre.

Wells residents do not object to the principle of retail development on Princes Road and realise that some development would be better than the status quo. They are however not prepared to accept anything less than a development which takes into account Wells' heritage and had no adverse effects on retail in the City Centre or upon the lives of residents.

Given the lack of transport links to the city it is doubtful that a major

manufacturing company will enter the city to replace the industries we have lost. Our focus as a city should be to support entrepreneurial, small and medium-sized companies who utilise new technologies. To assist in this regard commercial development sites have been earmarked at both Gate Lane and Nutricia.

6. Tourism

What we know

Wells has some of the most recognisable tourist attractions in the south west. Thousands of visitors come from all over the world to visit our Cathedral, Bishop's Palace and Vicars' Close.

Wells has a well-used Tourist Information Centre housed within the Town Hall which attracts 65,000 personal enquiries a year and 25,000 telephone or internet enquiries.

For more information, see appendix 19.

What we asked

A) If you had one million pounds to improve tourism in the city, how would you spend it?

B) What could bring in more tourists to the city?

What we were told

A) If you had one million pounds on new or improving tourist attractions in the city, how would you spend it?

13%	New and better car parks / coach facilities
7%	Upgrade Wells Museum
7%	Build a modern tourist hotel
7%	Give business assistance to shops and tourist facilities
6%	Upgrade the moat walk
5%	Fund improvements to the cathedral
5%	A Park and Ride scheme
4%	New tourist attractions (None specified)
4%	Pedestrianise the city centre
Others (42%)	Selection of others: Upgrade Bishop's Barn; improve Cathedral Green; build a community arts venue; create a Wells historical trail; improve the web sites advertising the city.

B) What ideas could bring in more tourists to the city?

- A permanent dedicated farmers' market with more outlets
- Improved advertising of the music provision, concerts, recitals etc.
- Lower car parking charges
- Better tourist (Brown) signs around the county
- Better street signs in the city
- Co-ordinated approach to marketing the city
- A new website advertising the city
- An intranet for businesses to share good practice
- Fill the empty shops with independent traders
- Improve traffic flow around the city
- Better bus routes to tourist attractions (Weston-super-Mare and Burnham-on-Sea)
- New premises for the Wells TIC

Conclusion

Residents of Wells recognise the importance of tourism to the city. They are in the unique position to judge what new attractions and ideas could bring more tourists into the city and how to highlight the food and music provision that already exists..

In terms of new and improving attractions it was recognised that transport links such as new car parks and coach facilities are critically important. Thereafter upgrades to the museum, Cathedral and Bishop's Palace Moat Walk were suggested. In respect of new tourist facilities, the need for a tourist hotel was highlighted as well as a Park and Ride scheme. The relevant local authorities need to take into account these suggestions in planning for the future.

To bring in new tourists a number of inexpensive suggestions were given such as the creation of a new all-encompassing web site for the city (including the City Council's and tourist web sites), an expansion of the farmers' market, improvements to signage outside and within the city, a co-ordinated marketing strategy and lower car parking charges. In addition to local authority involvement the co-operation of the tourist attractions and the TIC will be necessary to achieve these aims.

7. The Wells Environment

What we know

The Cathedral and Bishops Palace are maintained to a very high

standard and the residents of Wells rightly expect the same standard to be applied to the infrastructure and to the presentation of the rest of the city.

There have been marked improvements in street cleaning over the last four years, and although it is still raised as a concern, the number of complaints has fallen considerably.

Successful pilot schemes have been run for plastic and cardboard recycling. However to date these schemes have not been extended beyond their pilots, despite demand to do so.

For further information, see appendix 20.

What we asked

- 1) How do you rate the council's environmental services?
- 2) What other issues concern you regarding the environment in Wells?

What we were told

1) How do you rate the Council's Environmental Services

	Very Poor	Poor	Avr	Good	Very Good
Road surfacing	8%	38%	38%	13%	3%
Grass cutting	7%	17%	50%	23%	3%
Hedge cutting	10%	26%	38%	24%	2%
Waste collection	7%	11%	39%	32%	11%
Recycling collection	5%	17%	34%	34%	10%
Provision of dog bins	11%	33%	43%	10%	3%
Weeds on pavement	15%	36%	31%	14%	4%

2) What other issues concern you regarding the environment in Wells?

Uneven paving	Litter	Recycling of plastic and cardboard
Road signs are inadequate	Planning enforcement is poor	The state of water courses and road drainage
Road sweeping outside the city is poor (relief road)	Wrong slabs laid on pedestrian crossings for the blind	Objections to the council charging £25 for compost bins
We need a handyman for the city (lengthsman)	Better communications from the local authorities and their contact telephone numbers	

Conclusion

There would appear to be a level of dissatisfaction with the core services such as road resurfacing, grass cutting, hedge cutting and weed clearance provided by the local authorities. The local authorities would, however, argue that they have a regular programme of surveys and reviews in place. There appears to be a difference between what residents believe to be a problem and what the local authorities are prepared to act upon.

Although it is generally recognised that waste and recycling collections are good, the Somerset Waste Partnership's introduction of permanent plastic and cardboard recycling is requested and required.

The local authorities need to do a better job of communicating:-

- a. Their contact details to report infrastructure and environment issues
- b. The program of surveys and reviews that take place in the city

Once the above information has been communicated, members of the public need to be encouraged to:-

- a. Report the location of all potholes and poor road surfaces
- b. Report the locations where weeds are growing on the road or pavements and roads

In which case the relevant local authority can take the relevant remedial action.

The proposal was made that a city handyman or lengthsman is required. This employee would carry out basic repairs and maintenance throughout the city within a short time of being told of the issue. These schemes have been successfully piloted in other parts of Somerset.

8. Transport

What we know

There are a range of transportation issues that concern residents within the city. The relief road, whilst generally welcomed at the time, brought with it a rash of traffic lights that have proved unpopular.

Whilst a successful bus service runs from Wells to Bath, Bristol, Weston-

super-Mare and Taunton, the services that run within our city and to our immediate rural neighbours are not as successful and dissatisfaction is often raised.

Cycling is a popular activity for residents within the city and a number of groups have worked hard to provide cycle paths around the outskirts of Wells. Work is now commencing on linking those paths through the city itself.

On-street parking has become a major issue for residential areas surrounding the city centre. Roads such as The Liberty, Southover, West Street and Melrose Avenue are being used by non-residents who park their vehicles outside residents' homes for the majority of daytime hours.

For further information, see appendix 21.

What we asked

- 1) Youth Transport
 - a) How often do you use public transport?
 - b) What would make you use public transport more often?
- 2) What traffic and transportations issues concern you in Wells?
- 3) Would you welcome the introduction of a residents' parking scheme if you had to pay for a permit to park outside your home?

What we were told

1) Youth Transport Issues

a) How often do you use public transport?

Everyday	A few times a week	A few times a month	A few times a year	Never
9%	0%	55%	36%	0%

b) What would make use public transport more often

Cheaper prices	More buses	More destinations
73%	19%	8%

2) What traffic and transportations issues concern you in Wells?

Negative comments about public transport links	24%
Greater enforcement of parking regulations requested	23%

Requests for residents parking scheme	10%
Negative comments about traffic lights (number on the relief road and synchronisation)	9%
Requests for more parking	8%
General traffic management issues	6%
Positive comments about traffic lights (especially on relief road)	4%
Positive comments about roundabouts	4%
Support for full pedestrianisation of High Street	3%
Comments about waste and refuse collection	3%
Safer routes for cyclists	3%
Improve pedestrian/zebra crossings	2%
Misc	1%

3) Would you welcome a residents parking scheme being introduced if you had to pay for a permit to park outside your home?

Yes 55%	No 45%
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Conclusion

The combination of Wells' rural surroundings and expensive public transport is a huge barrier that prevents the young people of the city from accessing public transport. In a world where use of the car is discouraged. We need to do more to allow our young people access to public transport. Senior citizens are given a concessionary fares scheme, which has been welcomed. It is proposed that a similar scheme be introduced for the under-17s in Wells, transport provided free or at a discount.

Wells residents would ideally like to see roundabouts placed in some locations upon the relief road in place of the traffic lights. Somerset County Council has previously rejected this proposal. Given the support of Wells residents this issue needs to be taken back to the county council.

There are active campaigns in the city for pedestrian crossings to be provided along Bath Road and on the relief road adjacent to Sheldon Drive. Again the county council needs to be contacted on these projects and their support won.

Residents' parking schemes are generally acceptable to the city's residents, even if it requires a small fee to be paid. The District Council is working with the County Council to delegate the Civil Parking Enforcement powers to allow these schemes to be administered.

9. Health

What we know

The loss of the Wells Cottage Hospital has had an effect on the city of Wells and its ability to provide quality health care.

The alternative provision at Glastonbury has provided fewer facilities and is difficult to visit using public transport.

For further information, see appendix 22.

What we asked

1) How do you rate local health services?

2) What barriers prevent you from obtaining local quality health care?

What we were told

1) How do you rate local health services?

	Very Poor	Poor	Avr	Good	Very Good
NHS dentists	42%	29%	21%	6%	2%
Private dentists	5%	6%	37%	31%	21%
GPs	3%	4%	27%	33%	33%
Glastonbury Hospital	9%	10%	32%	30%	19%
Shepton Mallet Hospital	6%	7%	32%	37%	18%
Physiotherapy services	23%	33%	5%	27%	12%
Social services	8%	23%	38%	23%	8%
Community nurses	7%	10%	27%	32%	24%

2) What barriers prevent you from obtaining local quality health care

- No hospital in Wells
- Poor public transport to the Glastonbury Hospital
- Local transport to the doctors' surgeries
- Travelling to Bristol, Bath or Taunton for any consultations
- Not enough NHS dentists
- Waiting list for physiotherapy is too long

- No local dialysis treatment
- With the demise of Mendip Primary Care Trust, demand for a new hospital at the Priory Hospital site.

Conclusion

The major concern for Wells residents is the removal of the Cottage Hospital and the reduced facilities available at Glastonbury Hospital.

There are a wealth of private dentists in the city, however there is a lack of dentists providing NHS care.

The GP service is generally seen as good to very good, however transport to the GP Surgery on Glastonbury Road is considered an obstacle.

Transport is a significant barrier to healthcare. An improved bus service is required to the Glastonbury Hospital and to the health centre

There is support for more healthcare provision to be provided in the city and many rooms in the old Priory Hospital building are vacant, never having been filled since its refurbishment. These may well provide the venue for increased services to the city.

With the growing population in Wells, especially the older generation, there is a case to be made for a new hospital to be provided in the future. The city should support the work of the Wells Hospital Action Group in raising funds for this project. .

10. Leisure

What we know

Wells has a variety of leisure facilities which include a leisure centre, a swimming pool, a sports ground, a public recreation ground, a cinema and a theatre.

Wells already had an aging population but, with the increased provision of sheltered accommodation, there has been a substantial increase to the retired population. Despite the increase in this section of the population, there have been no new leisure activities provided to cater for the new level of demand.

For further information, see appendix 22.

What we asked

1) What additional leisure activities would you like to see in the city?
(This question was answered by adults only)

2) What barriers are there to leisure facilities in the city?

What we were told

1) What additional leisure activities would you like to see in the city?

Activity	%
Outdoor Swimming Pool	28%
Better cycle routes	20%
Public tennis courts	18%
Squash courts	10%
Ice rink	10%
10 pin bowling	7%
BMX track	7%

2) What barriers are there to leisure facilities in the city?

- The leisure centre gym is expensive
- To use the sports ground you have to be a member of a club
- All the leisure facilities are on one side of the city and there are no public transport links
- The swimming pool is too shallow so you cannot go diving

Conclusion

The residents of Wells would welcome additional leisure activities to be provided in the city.

With housing, light industrial and retail at the forefront of development in the city, any leisure development will most likely be small scale and attached to other developments.

Future leisure developments must meet the demands and demographics of the population.

11. Community Safety

What we know

Wells is not identified in the Avon and Somerset Constabulary statistics as a hot spot for criminal activity. Despite this statement, residents of Wells often complain that there is too much crime within the city, given its rural setting.

If actual crimes are not the main cause of residents concern then the

fear of crime is the issue which needs addressing.

Police Community Support Officers provide an excellent service, yet an increased police presence is always requested.

CCTV provides coverage for the city 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Therefore when the police are not present in the city centre, a camera will be.

For further information, see appendix 23.

What we asked

- 1) How do traders view community safety services?
- 2) How safe do residents feel walking the streets of Wells?
- 3) What would make residents feel safer?
- 4) Have you been a victim of a crime in the last 5 years?

What we were told

1) How do traders view community safety services?

Police	Poor 17%	Satisfactory 46%	Good 24%	Excellent 13%
CCTV	Poor 13%	Satisfactory 40%	Good 37%	Excellent 10%
Radio Link	Poor 3%	Satisfactory 46%	Good 32%	Excellent 19%
Pub Watch	Poor 3%	Satisfactory 58%	Good 26%	Excellent 13%

2) How safe do residents feel walking the streets of Wells?

Very Safe	28%
Safe	42%
Unsafe	23%
Very Unsafe	7%

3) What would make residents feel safer?

	Yes	No
More police	91%	9%
More CCTV	51%	49%
More street lighting	51%	49%

Other Comments

More security when pubs and clubs close
 More security at the bus station late at night.
 More Neighbourhood Watch schemes and support from the police in

setting them up

4) Have you been a victim of a crime in the last 5 years?

Residents (136 Responses)

Yes	No
28%	72%

Traders (49 Responses)

Yes	No
34%	66%

Conclusion

The traders of Wells are positive about the service provided by the police and PCSOs, CCTV, Radio link and Pub Watch but a number of criticisms made against the police and CCTV were made. However, if these facilities were increased (police officer numbers and cameras) they would be generally welcomed.

An increased police presence is overwhelmingly requested by Wells residents. However despite these requests a significant majority of residents and traders have not been a victim of crime and felt safe or very safe whilst walking the streets of the city.

The evidence suggests that the fear of crime and the perception of crime is worse than the actual number of crimes committed.

The Wells Neighbourhood Watch Association has been very successful in creating new schemes and bringing the existing schemes together under one umbrella. There is a case for further Neighbourhood Watch schemes to be enacted and the support of the police and the association in starting them.

Part C. Where we aspire to be

12. A Vision for Wells

The city needs clear direction, so we need a series of common goals.

In general terms what we want for the future of our city is for it to:-

- Retain its heritage
- Attract visitors from all over the world

- Provide employment opportunities for local people
- Provide housing opportunities for local people
- Become known for our local industry and produce, especially music and food
- Achieve an appropriate degree of prosperity
- Local authorities to co-ordinate plans and services
- Local partners and organisations to pool resources
- Become more self-sufficient

The views of residents who were consulted on how they want to see the city change in the next 20 years have been collated and detailed below:

The City

In the next 10 years the majority of Wells residents thought that Wells should stay true to its roots and either not modernise or only move forward at a slow considered pace. A lesser number of people felt that Wells should retain its charm and character but should expand in a sustainable way. Only a small minority of people believed that Wells should modernise and reach its full tourism potential. These views have knock-on effects for the future commercial viability of Wells.

The High Street / Retail and Commerce

In the next 10 years Wells should retain its independent shops and the architecture in the High Street. Wells should not be seduced by major high street stores nor allow modern fascias to be placed on our High Street buildings.

In the next 10 years the city centre should thrive, with a reduction in the number of empty shops and charity shops. The future of retail and commerce in the city will not be through large-scale employers, it will be through small and medium sized companies. It was recognised that the professional sector and small independent companies must be supported by residents, the chamber of commerce and the local authorities if it is to prosper.

New employment opportunities at Nutricia, Gate Lane and the Clare's sites must be fully realised immediately and supported.

Education and Young People

In the next 10 years a greater number of young people should be working and living in the city.

There will be greater co-ordination of services between the County Council, the youth in Wells, the YMCA and other local authorities in order to bring forward a major youth project for the City. There are a number of ideas that range from the inexpensive to the expensive. The

youth of Wells need to be included in the political decision-making process.

The temporary classrooms in schools in Wells should be removed and consideration given to completely rebuilding outdated parts of schools using the government's Building Schools for the Future programme.

The Wells Environment

In the immediate future Wells will be at the forefront of recycling, with both cardboard and plastics included.

In the next 10 years Wells will do all that it can to reduce its carbon footprint, lower the amount of light pollution and look towards alternative energy schemes.

Communications by all levels of local government will need to be dramatically improved over the next 10 years and "one-stop shops" provided for all local government needs.

The local environment could be vastly improved by the introduction of a City Lengthsman (handyman) who could undertake immediate repairs and maintenance. A locally employed lengthsman could respond to issues more quickly than the current county council and district council resources.

Transport

In the next 10 years the majority of the traffic issues in the city should have been resolved. The relief road would have been thoroughly reviewed and where necessary traffic lights removed or re-sequenced.

A traffic plan for the city in vehicle, cycle and pedestrian terms would have been drafted to assist the local authorities in future planning for the city.

Car parking issues in the city would have been resolved. The car parks will be better utilised and on-street parking limited to residents only on key streets surrounding the city centre.

There will be no full pedestrianisation of the high street, however on market days (Wednesday and Saturday) it could be considered for trading hours.

Young people in the city will be given greater opportunity to travel with the introduction of a young person's travel card. They will be able to access education and leisure facilities that the city could never provide.

Community Safety

In the next 10 years Wells will have a more visible police and PCSO service. The officers will dedicate more time to being on the beat and patrolling neighbourhoods rather than being in the police station complying with bureaucracy.

The police will have assisted local residents in expanding the Neighbourhood Watch schemes to new areas in the city.

CCTV cameras currently serve the centre of the city. However, the expansion of the scheme should be considered to alleviate issues on the perimeter of the city.

Housing

In the next 10 years new housing developments will have been built at Nutricia and Clare's. Of the new homes 40% will be affordable homes for local young people.

New development sites will be considered within the city itself. However, consideration should be given to developing land outside of the city limits, for example between Wells and South Horrington and Haybridge.

As a result of the number of new affordable homes that are built, a higher percentage of young people will remain in the city as there will be housing opportunities available.

The issue of housing cannot be considered in isolation from that of jobs and employment opportunities within the city.

Leisure

In the next 10 years residents of Wells will be able to access an increased variety of sporting attractions. Parts of the athletics ground could be opened so that non-members can use the football, netball and tennis facilities.

A high-quality leisure development including a theatre or other cultural activities and restaurants could benefit residents.

Tourism

In the immediate future there will be improved internet links to advertise the city globally. When the visitors visit they will be assisted by increased signage to point them to the Tourist Information Centre so that they can enjoy the other attractions in the area.

The creation of new attractions should be considered. The successful Wednesday farmers' market needs to be promoted and further

expanded to increase knowledge of and trade in local produce. The existence of top-quality music at Wells Cathedral School is another asset to be investigated and exploited.

Health

In the immediate future public transport links need to be improved so that residents of Wells can access both the hospital in Glastonbury and the health centre more easily.

Wells residents would ask Somerset Primary Care Trust to provide additional healthcare services in the unused parts of the Priory Hospital site. This could range from consultancy services which would save Wells residents travelling to Bath, Bristol and Taunton or for more general treatment such as physiotherapy or osteopathic treatment.

In the next 10 to 20 years Wells residents want hospital provision returned to the city. Wells residents realise the expense of the hospital and the fact that this is not a short-term project. In any event, pressure is to be maintained on Somerset Primary Care Trust to support this scheme.

13. Delivering the Plan

Who will deliver the Wells Vision?

- 1) The residents of Wells, including individuals who have specific skills relevant to the project
- 2) Wells City Council
- 3) Mendip District Council
- 4) Somerset County Council
- 5) Wells Chamber of Commerce
- 6) Avon and Somerset Constabulary
- 7) Somerset Primary Care Trust
- 8) YMCA
- 9) Wells Cathedral
- 10) The Bishop's Palace
- 11) The Blue School
- 12) Wells Cathedral School
- 13) Wells Civic Society
- 14) Wells-based community groups

What will happen now?

1. A consultation will start with Wells residents upon the contents of this draft plan
2. Residents will be invited to comment on the plan in writing

3. A public meeting will be held for residents to come forward to discuss the plan
4. A consultation will start with all local authorities
5. A consultation will start with the local partners
6. Amendments will be made to this plan and the final plan will be published
7. The final plan will be distributed to all residents who require a copy, all local authorities and all partners
8. All local authorities will be invited to comment on the wishes of the residents expressed in this plan.
9. Local councillors and community groups to use the plan in considering projects for the future of the city

14) Model of an Action Plan for Wells

There follows an initial list of desirable outcomes. This model gives examples of possible partnerships and models of cooperation. For any named objectives to be realised, they are obviously subject to wider economic constraints and need to be prioritised in the light of further consultation, before any action can be undertaken.

Timescale	Area	Event	Partners in Progress
Housing			
Immediate	Housing	New Affordable Housing developments on Clare's and Nutricia Sites	Mendip District Council Mendip Housing Ltd
Immediate	Housing	Change housing points allocation to ensure young and local people have priority	Mendip District Council
5 Years	Housing	Consider housing developments outside of the present city limits	Mendip District Council
20 Years	Housing	Create a city which is vibrant and affordable which attracts more young people to remain here	Wells City Council Mendip District Council Somerset County Council
Education and Young People			
Immediate	Education and Young People	Provision of a children's centre to provide advice and support for parents	Somerset County Council
Immediate	Education and Young People	Outreach work to the estates at the	Somerset County Council

		far ends of Wells; Keward and Churchill Road	
5 Years	Education and Young People	Provision of 1 major scheme for young people. Youth to identify the project	All local authorities YMCA
5 Years	Education and Young People	Removal of all temporary classrooms in Wells Schools	Somerset County Council
20 Years	Education and Young People	Rebuild of the schools in Wells, under the Schools for the Future scheme	Somerset County Council
Retail			
5 Years	Retail	Pedestrianisation attempts should be resisted in the short term	Residents
5 Years	Retail	Princes road development; only if it is right for Wells	Mendip District Council, Chamber of Commerce, developers
5 Years	Retail	Support new employment opportunities at Gate Lane, Clare's and Nutricia	Mendip District Council
20 Years	Retail	The High Street should be preserved in terms of the buildings and the type of business	Chamber of Commerce
Tourism			
Immediate	Tourism	New and improved signage to the Tourist Information Centre	Mendip District Council
Immediate	Tourism	A new website to promote the city and its tourist attractions	TIC, Chamber of Commerce, Mendip District Council
5 Years	Tourism	Creation of a farmers' market	Mendip District Council
20 Years	Tourism	Creation of a new tourist attraction	
The Wells Environment			
Immediate	The Wells Environment	Introduction of plastic and cardboard	Mendip District Council Somerset County

		recycling	Council
5 Years	The Wells Environment	Communications to be improved between all local authorities and the residents of Wells	Wells City Council. Mendip District Council. Somerset County Council
5 Years	The Wells Environment	Introduction of a parish lengthsman (handy man)	Wells City Council Somerset County Council
5 Years	The Wells Environment	Introduction of a parish newsletter	Wells City Council
10 Years	The Wells Environment	Reduce the light pollution produced by the city	Mendip District Council
Transport			
5 Years	Transport	Introduction of Residents' Parking Schemes to alleviate parking problems on residential roads	Mendip District Council, Somerset County Council
5 Years	Transport	Consider the introduction of a concessionary travel card for young people	Somerset County Council
5 Years	Transport	Pedestrian crossings to be installed along Bath Road and on the relief road	Somerset County Council
5 Year	Transport	Creation of a traffic plan for the city	Mendip District Council, Somerset County Council
10 Years	Transport	Replacement of traffic lights at some locations with roundabouts and pelican crossings	Somerset County Council
Health			
20 Years	Health	Provision of a new hospital in Wells to meet growing population needs	Somerset Primary Care Trust
Immediate	Health	Improved transport links to the Glastonbury Hospital	Somerset County Council
Leisure			
Immediate	Leisure	The opening of the athletics ground or designated parts of it to the general public	Mendip District Council
20 Years	Leisure	Creation of a high-	

		quality leisure development	
Community Safety			
Immediate	Community Safety	More visible police patrols in the High Street	Avon & Somerset Constabulary
Immediate	Community Safety	More visible police patrols in residential streets	Avon & Somerset Constabulary
5 Years	Community Safety	Introduction of new Neighbourhood Watch Schemes	Avon & Somerset Constabulary
5 Years	Community Safety	Introduction of new CCTV cameras	Mendip District Council

Acknowledgements

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Hannah Reynolds Associates; 2MD Regeneration; Community Council for Somerset; Wells City Council; Mendip District Council; Somerset County Council; Lavinia Bryne.

PART E Appendices

APPENDIX 15 Population and Housing

Summary:

The population profile of Wells has a higher proportion of elderly people than the district or region. This is particularly the case in the Central ward. The lack of affordable housing is identified as a key reason for young people and families moving away or finding it impossible to move into the city. This, in turn, is identified by businesses as a barrier to recruiting staff. In the longer term, the growth of Wells is likely to see an increasing proportion of elderly people and a declining proportion of working people. This will place increasing stress on local services. The demographic balance of the city needs to be adjusted in the longer term so that there is a greater proportion of people of a working age. New housing development is a necessity if this is to be achieved.

Baseline Data:

Population

- Wells has a significantly older population than Mendip, the region or England - 28% of Wells residents are aged 60/65 or older compared to 19% in England.

- The percentage of children aged 0-15 in Wells is 17%, compared to 19% in England. In 2006 there were 1,985 children (in families claiming child benefit) in Wells, of whom 435 (22%) were aged under 5.
- The proportion of the population of working age, at 55%, was smaller in Wells than Mendip, the region or England (62%).
- The proportion of young people aged 16-29 compares closely to Mendip but is 4% lower than the England population. On the whole, this age group tends to live in the large cities rather than rural areas and market cities.
- In the period to 2028, the population of Mendip is forecast to rise to 124,900. If this 18% increase is reflected in Wells, the population will increase to c.12,400.
- In England, the proportion of people aged 60+ is forecast to increase by 30% between 2001 and 2026. Transferring this growth level to Wells will result in more than one in three residents being aged 60/65+. At the same time, the working age population will fall to about 50% of the total population.
- The 2001 census shows that 98.66% of the population classify themselves as white. Within this there are a small number who have a white Irish or white "other". Further analysis of the figures shows that there are small numbers of individuals from minority ethnic communities in Wells as a whole. For example, 42 individuals of Asian or Asian British background, with the largest proportion being of Bangladeshi background, live in Wells St Cuthbert ward. There are a smaller number of people from Black or Black British background, numbering 20 in total. There are a relatively high number of people from Chinese or other ethnic background, predominantly in the Wells St Thomas ward. Whilst the numbers overall are small it suggests a richer diversity than might at first be supposed for the city.

	Wells	Central	St Thomas	St Cuthbert's
Total population	10,648	1,727	4,166	4,755
% of ward population aged 0-15	17.2%	12.4%	18.4%	18.0%
% of ward population aged 16-29	14.2%	13.3%	13.9%	14.8%
% of ward population	27.9%	35.7%	29.0%	24.2%

aged over 60/65				
% of ward population of working age	54.8%	51.9%	52.6%	57.8%

Figures use Mid-2005 population estimates.

Housing

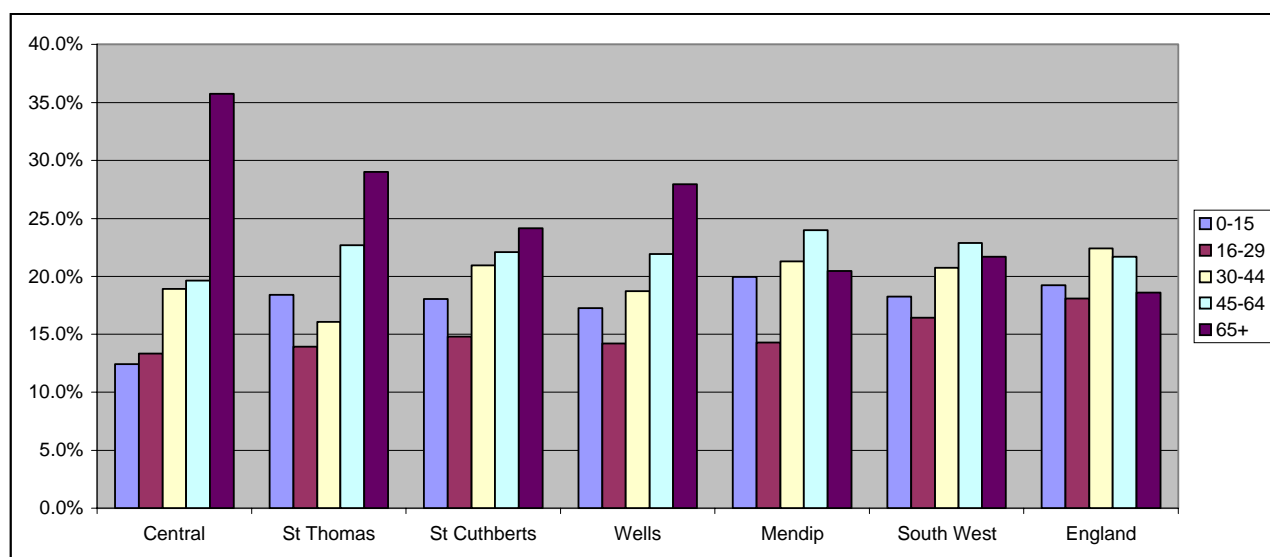
- In 2001, there were 4,754 households in Wells. The average household size was 2.14 people.
- In 2005 there were 5,005 residential properties in Wells.
- With house prices averaging £200,169 in 2006, the ratio to income in Mendip was 10.8 (better than Somerset at 11.2 and the South West at 11.8 and BANES at 13.4). In common with most areas, this was marginally better than in 2004. The ratio in Wells is, however, likely to be higher due to its desirability as a place to live, despite the present financial climate.
- Between 2001 and 2007 there were 207 housing completions in Wells, resulting in a growth in properties of about 4%. The housing completions represented about 10% of all completions in Mendip.
- In February 08 there was an identified housing need for 889 dwellings in Wells. 587 of these were one bedroom units, and 200 were two bed units. The area around Wookey Hole Rd was favoured by more than 90% of those needing housing.
- The LDF Monitoring Report 2006/2007 forecast the completion of 229 residential units in Wells by the end of 2011/12. The Local Development Framework is a collection of planning documents that will shape the future of Mendip District. cf www.mendip.gov.uk/CouncilService.asp?id=SX9452-A7813631
 - 125 residential units are proposed for Clare's site
 - Residential and B1 uses proposed for the 5.5ha Nutricia site. Residential will include 22% affordable rents or joint ownership housing and 18% affordable market homes
 - Policy SN2 of the Mendip Local Plan to 2011 states that affordable housing contributions will be sought from any development on sites of 1Ha or of 25 or more dwellings.
- In 2005 there were 61 second homes in Wells (source: DCLG). This was in line with the District average.

Ward profiles

- Wells Central is the smallest of the city's three wards, with 16% of the whole population. The median age for Wells Central is 52

(compared to 40 in Mendip and 37 in England). More than one in three of ward residents are aged over 60/65. One in ten of the city's 0-15 year olds live in the ward. The ward has the smallest proportion of residents of working age (15%). In Central ward there are 1.9 people per household and 0.93 people per dwelling. Single person pensioner households made up 33% of all households in Central ward, compared to c.22% in the others, while all single person households make up 47% of all households, compared to c.35% in the other wards. 37% (1868) of the properties were in Central ward, despite it having only 16% of the population. The level of owner occupation was c.70%. 16% of households live in social housing.

- St Cuthbert's is the largest of all the wards, with 45% of the city's population. The median age for the ward is 40. The age profile is younger than the other wards. Nearly half of all the city's 0-15 year olds live in the ward as do 47% of the city's residents of working age. St Cuthbert's' demographic profile is the closest of all the wards to Mendip as a whole. The level of owner occupation was c.70%. The highest level of social rented housing is in St Cuthbert's (17%). 7% of households live in social housing.
- St Thomas ward has more of the city's population aged 60-65 than any other ward (1,209 people or 41% of the city's total). The median age for St Thomas ward is age 46. St Thomas ward which has nearly 3 people per property. The highest level of owner occupation was in St Thomas ward, at 81%.



Population distribution by age

The local needs:

Summary from Interviews:

- House prices are very high but wages are very low
- Very hard for people on low incomes to rent let alone buy - for single people the only real option is to share
- Hard for people in 20s-30s / young families to move back/in to Wells
- Recruitment problems for local businesses due to high cost of housing
- Desperate for new affordable housing
- Elderly and retired dominate Wells
- Out migration of young people.

LDF consultation:

- Sense of Wells as a "retirement" city
- Provide more affordable housing/housing to encourage younger residents to stay
- Need more shared ownership schemes
- Take possession of and allocate empty flats, particularly on the High Street
- Evidence that low-cost housing built for sale is now owned by private landlords.

A Vision for Wells:

Wells has a balanced community that can provide for a full range of housing needs, including affordable housing for young people and families. The housing supply is sufficient to meet the needs of the growing employment base in the city.

Aims:

- 1.1 To enable young people and young families to remain in or move into Wells
- 1.2 To rebalance the demographic profile so that the young:old mix more accurately reflects the district average

Objectives:

- A. To identify sites in and around Wells for new housing development that can meet the identified housing need
- B. To adopt planning policies that promote the development of family and young people's housing in preference to elderly peoples dwellings
- C. To promote the development of affordable housing for rent or shared ownership in preference to low-cost sale

- D. To ensure that sufficient supply of smaller housing suitable for elderly people exists for occupiers of large dwellings to move on without having to leave the city.

APPENDIX 16 Education and Young People

Summary:

Wells has a smaller population of young people than Mendip as a whole and fewer households have any children than England as a whole. Academically, young people in Wells are high achievers, and the city also benefits from having a leading independent school. There are some problems with young people but these are not significant compared to other areas; are sometimes the fault of people aged 20+ as opposed to teenagers; and may be caused by young people who live elsewhere. Nevertheless, there is a clear hostility towards young people from some sectors of the local community which leads to resentment and alienation.

Wells has a lack of facilities for young people, although this is not new and is not untypical of small market cities. The leisure centre, which is in the west end of the city, is remote for young people living in St Thomas ward.

Half of the young people in Wells live in St Cuthbert's ward.

Baseline Data:

Young people

- The Wells Youth Centre, based in the White Building, is open on Mondays and Fridays from 7.00pm until 9:00pm. It provides 1 x full time youth worker, 1 x youth worker in charge and 4 x sessional workers. It attracts c.30 young people aged 13-17 per night, mostly from harder-up families in Wells. There is no outreach work.
- In 2006 there were 1,080 families claiming child benefit in Wells (source: HMRC, Aug 2006) suggesting that there are children in fewer than one in four households, compared to almost one in three in England.
- In 2004 there were 73 youth justice referrals per thousand young people aged 10-17 in Central ward, while the other wards experienced 16 per thousand. The Mendip figure is 19 per thousand. ('Youth justice referrals' enable cases of 10 to 17-year olds pleading guilty and being convicted for the first time in Court to be referred to a Youth Justice Panel.)

Education

- At Key Stage 2 in 2007, 91% of children achieved Level 4 or above in English (compared to 81% in Somerset) and 76% achieved the same level in Maths (compared to 78% in Somerset). In Central ward, 100% of children achieved Level 4 or above in English, compared to 80% in St Thomas. However, 88% of children in St Thomas ward achieved Level 4 or above in Maths, compared to 79% in the other two wards.
- In 2004, 104 pupils per thousand in Wells had a statement of special educational needs. The highest level was in St Thomas ward, at 124 per thousand and the lowest was in St Cuthbert. The Mendip figure was 130 per thousand.

The Local Needs:

Summary from Interviews:

- The Blue School and Cathedral School are amongst the best in the country
- It's a safe place for young people to grow up in - a good place to bring up children
- Older people are intimidated by youth
- Youth feel resented by older people
- Lack of inter-generational communication leads to suspicion and isolation
- Youth often get blamed for problems caused by people in 20s
- Youth service can't provide level of outreach they would like
- Businesses not engaged in youth work / support for youth service
- No Children's Centre in Wells so there is something of a lack of coordination of services for children in need
- Little for young people - most activity is geared towards middle-aged people and older.

LDF consultation:

- Local children/youth generally well behaved but bored. More facilities and interesting/challenging activities for young people (unspecified).
- Strong support for focal-point leisure activity within convenient access of city centre, particularly bowling and/or and ice rink (several suggestions concern the Nutricia site)
- Play equipment and facilities for younger children are dated and damaged. Strong support for renewal.

- Expand and improve the cinema.
- Youth centre unappealing. Requirement for quality indoor facility where young people can meet (such as a youth café and activity centre).
- Provision of activities specifically for older people (social events, clubs, dances etc.)

A Vision for Wells:

Wells will be renowned for the quality of its education. Young people will be valued for their contribution to the community, and will respect the needs of the more elderly residents. There will be a range of activities and services to occupy young people.

Aims:

- 4.1 To ensure that educational services in Wells are able to develop and improve on an ongoing basis
- 4.2 To develop respect, trust and understanding between young and older people
- 4.3 To encourage the provision of a range of additional facilities for young people

Objectives:

- A. Adopt clear strategies that support the further development of education facilities in Wells, both for young people and lifelong learning not least because of its importance in attracting businesses to the city
- B. Secure additional support and resources for the Wells Youth Centre, including improved engagement of local businesses
- C. Establish neighbourhood initiatives to develop links and understanding between young and old people
- D. Work with developers, service providers and other appropriate parties to increase the range of commercial and non-commercial facilities available to young people
- E. Promote and encourage the development of a children's centre in Wells.

APPENDIX 17 Retail.

Summary:

In recent years Wells has lost much of its traditional employment base in manufacturing. The level of part-time employment is relatively high.

Baseline Data:

- Of people aged 16-74 who were in employment in 2001, the largest group were in retailing (just under 17%), followed by manufacturing (16%). Both these groups were smaller than in Mendip as a whole and since 2001 there have been considerable job losses in manufacturing in Wells. The education sector, which employed nearly 11% of people, was much larger than the regional and national figures, at less than 8%. Similarly the health and community service sectors employ more people than is found elsewhere, although to a lesser degree. Together, the education, health and community service sectors employ more than one in four people (27% which is 4% higher than district, regional and national figures) while the retail and hotel sector employ just under one in four people.
- In 2001, the level of economic activity amongst people aged 16-74 was lower in Wells, at 63%, than in the district (69%), region or nation.
- Of those who were economically active, 79% were employees, which is slightly higher than the other comparison areas.
- Part-time working was more common in Wells in 2001, than elsewhere. 29% of employees worked part-time, a probable reflection of the importance of the retail and hotel sectors in the local economy.
- The level of self-employment is lower than elsewhere. Of the self-employed, the proportion of those working part-time is again higher.
- Of those people who are economically inactive, 53.5% were retired, a higher proportion than all the other areas while the proportion of people who were looking after the home or were sick/disabled was lower than elsewhere.
- In 2001 there was a higher proportion of people with Level 4/5 qualifications in Wells (22%) than the district or the South West (19%). Similarly, there was a slightly lower proportion of people with no or only Level 1 qualifications. St Thomas ward had the highest proportion of people with Level 4/5 qualifications (27%) while St Cuthbert's had the lowest (18%). Conversely, St Cuthbert's had the highest proportion of people with no qualifications (29%) while St Thomas had the lowest (24%).
- There is a small but successful technology base in Wells and surrounds.

- Wells has a high quality environment, good schools, and relatively cheap business (non-retail) rents compared to Bristol, Bath etc. This is attractive for many businesses.
- Wells has good proximity to four universities in Bristol and Bath.
- Road links are poor and rail links are non-existent.
- The Cathedral School is the largest employer with 300 staff and £12m turnover.
- 17.3 acre Cathedral Park bought in 2007 by David McLean Developments of Chester for £3.5m. Plan to develop 92,000 sq ft of B1, and 135,000 sq ft of industrial and warehousing (including 35,000 sq ft of trade counter).
- Planning permission for 5,800 sq m of high quality B1 space granted at Nutricia.
- Increasing market demand in UK for office buildings with high environmental performance standards¹

The Local Needs:

Summary from Interviews:

- Wells is holding its own against many other market cities.
- An economic niche in tourism and culture (especially music which is getting bigger and bigger). Also a growing food reputation
- The Chamber of Commerce works really hard
- Lots of small businesses that are doing well, but they don't employ many people
- Local manufacturing base has been lost
- Low unemployment, but lack of employment opportunities for low-skilled and young people and the quality of employment and the opportunities are not great
- Wages are low so many people have to have two jobs just to get by
- Hard to recruit support staff, wages are not high enough to support people to move into the area
- High proportion of people commuting out, especially to Bristol
- Importance of local heritage to local businesses (e.g. prestige, trade)
- Lack of young entrepreneurs
- Conflict between the interests of the elderly population and a working population in search of jobs

¹ <http://www.propertyweek.com/story.asp?sectioncode=39&storycode=3093656&featurecode=11989&c=1>

LDF consultation:

- Re-attract the industrial sector to the city. Encourage manufacturers and keep them in Wells.
- Sense of a “retirement” city emphasised by its dormitory quality. A large proportion of the population is forced to work elsewhere.

A Vision for Wells:

Wells will have a reputation as a place for technology industries that are attracted by business clusters, the historic environment, public safety and high quality education provision. There is almost full employment, and only a small number of people find the need to travel away from the city to their place of work. Household income levels are increasing faster than national and regional rates.

Aims:

- 2.1 To increase the level of employment in Wells
- 2.2 To increase the number of businesses attracted by Wells’ natural strengths
- 2.3 To increase the number and range of wealth creating enterprises
- 2.4 To increase income levels

Objectives:

- A. Secure resources to develop an inward investment strategy for Wells, promoting close links to international airport, high quality environment, good schools and safe for families.
- B. Identify and promote site(s) for development to high environmental standards for industries that do not require good road links e.g. technology based industries.
- C. Ensure, through protection and new development, the availability of B class units for Small and Medium Enterprises in a range of unit sizes, quality and rents.
- D. Establish forums to foster an enterprise culture through marketing, work with schools, mentoring, support for growing businesses, promoting local business opportunities and supporting entrepreneurs willing to take risks.
- E. Develop infrastructure to ensure that local residents are aware of, assisted and enabled to apply for new employment opportunities in the city.
- F. Ensure availability of affordable housing for those in vital, but often lower paid, support jobs.

Summary:

Local retail demand comes from: a) visitors b) wealthy residents c) low income residents. Their retail needs are different but it is possible that in the public debate about retailing in Wells, not all voices are being equally heard.

National retail trends, in which customers are generally looking for low prices and high availability, are more favourable to multiple retailers than the independents. Food, in particular, is dominated by one national supermarket. Niches still exist for independent retailers, but often these are in speciality markets that do not meet mainstream needs.

Wells' city status means that many national brands want to have representation, which in turn attracts large investors who know that they will pay premium rents, irrespective of the level of turnover. This makes it very difficult for independent retailers to find premises.

Few of the existing retail units meet modern retailing specifications in terms of accessibility, deliveries and floorspace. Units can therefore be hard to let, or will result in retailers trading below their full potential. If new units are built, however, they will have to generate a certain level of rental income in order to cover the developer's investment and this may be above that which is affordable for local businesses with lower turnovers.

The format of putting car parks at the opposite end of the city to the key attractions works well in terms of generating passing trade. It is unclear, however, how much the shops have benefited from this trade.

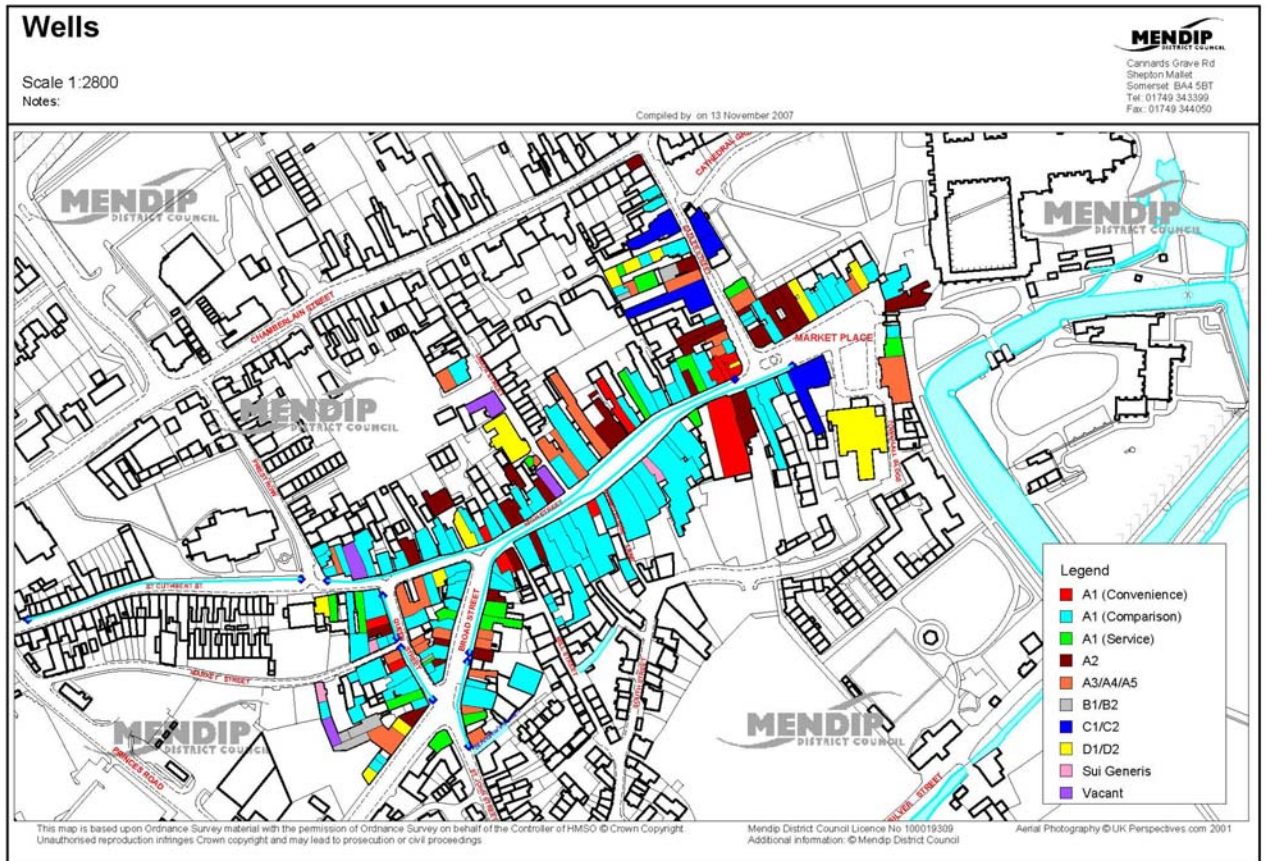
Many people clearly consider the environment on the main shopping streets to be poor quality. The number of charity shops is an issue for some people.

Baseline Data:

- Wells has a range of convenience shopping including specialist bakers, newsagents, off licenses and a twice weekly market. Within the city centre there is a small Somerfield supermarket and an edge of centre Tesco. There is also an out-of-centre Lidl. The facilities in the city centre serve main shopping trips as well as top up shopping. In terms of comparison shopping there is a modest range of national and independent shops selling comparison goods. There are a small number of retail warehouses outside the city centre. Services include a range of high street national banks, cafés, restaurants,

takeaways, travel agents and hairdressers/beauty parlours. (Source: Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, 2006, Retail and city centre uses study)

- Wells has a higher level of representation by national retailers than its population would normally suggest.
- In 2005 there were 175 ground floor retail units. 57% were used for comparison shopping, above the national average of 49%. Most units are smaller than 200 sq m.
- In January 08, prime retail yields were 6%. This represents the best return on investment in the last eight years. It compares to Bridgwater (6%), Frome (7%) and Taunton (4.5%). The lower the percentage figure, the more attractive the centre to retailers and investors.
- The quality of shop fronts is variable and generally fails to reflect the historic qualities elsewhere in Wells
- In 2005/06 Tesco attracted 60% of food shopping in Wells while Somerfield attracted 16%. 60% of shoppers stayed in Wells for their non-food comparison shopping while 18% went to Bristol. For clothes and footwear however, 26% went to Bristol while only 22% stayed in Wells. While over 50% of shoppers had no dislikes about shopping in Wells, those who did identified the lack of large shops (25.9%), poor choice of shops (25.4%) and poor quality of shops (13.2%). People most like proximity to home (60%), close to home (30%) and the general atmosphere (13.7%). (Source: Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, 2006, Retail and city centre uses study)
- £40m Centros Miller development includes 10,000 sq ft retail store and other smaller retail units aimed at "local / regional retailers"
- Tesco has planning permission for an additional 60,000 sq ft footprint
- Tinknell's proposal for 25,000 sq ft Sainsbury's



The Local Needs:

Summary from Interviews:

- Visitors park at the west end and then walk past all the shops to get to the Cathedral and Palace. Generates the passing trade for the businesses.
- Very good market, although prices too high for many residents.
- Food retailing dominated by one supermarket.
- Independent shops closing.
- Uncertainty surrounding impact of Princes Rd development.
- Current retail offer is not meeting local needs in terms of products or quality. Many residents not shopping in Wells or spending their money locally.
- Retail units don't meet modern needs.
- Many prime units owned by institutional investors with little involvement in future of Wells.
- Rents and rates are high because of 'city' status.
- Local retailers not really pushing themselves.
- Empty shops and charity shops making High Street appear shabby.

LDF consultation:

- Boost appearance and use of High Street by encouraging higher quality shops.
- Larger chains should not be discouraged – apparent resistance is to the detriment of the City.
- No Tesco expansion. Food economy already dominated by the store. No need for more or bigger supermarkets generally.
- Encourage and promote local markets, co-operatives specialising in local fresh produce.
- Encourage smaller, higher quality food shops with more personal service, fresh quality goods and choice.
- Give local independent business priority for empty stores in city centre (subsidise rates and rents if necessary)
- Significant approval of the markets in Wells.
- Introduce additional, specialised, frequent farmers market.
- Encourage higher quality supermarket (Waitrose, Sainsbury) to the city.
- Notable increase in begging in the city which can be threatening and intimidating

A Vision for Wells:

Wells has a high quality retail offer that meets the needs of all its residents and secures a high level of spend from visitors.

Aims:

- 3.1 Improve the quality of the main shopping streets.
- 3.2 Adopt a clear strategy that identifies the type of retailing that Wells requires.
- 3.3 Support and direct retailers in meeting local consumer demand, and encourage consumers to use local retailers.
- 3.4 Support and develop local markets.

Objectives:

- A. Work with planners, retailers and property owners to improve the quality of the retail facades.
- B. Undertake a structured and informed public debate about the future retailing needs of Wells with a view to adopting a strategy for future retail investment and development in the city.

- C. Establish a structure to monitor consumer trends in Wells and feed intelligence to local retailers in order to help them improve their offer and increase sales.
- D. Encourage retailers to access business support services that will improve their offer.

APPENDIX 19 Tourism.

Summary:

Tourism defines much of Wells. The Cathedral and Bishop's Palace attract hundreds of thousands of visitors each year who make a substantial contribution to the local economy. At the same time, the visitors place demands upon the city for services ranging from parking to toilets and from cream teas to books. The tourist industry is volatile even at the best of times so a city that is so reliant upon it must have an offer that is robust and resilient. There is a need for diversification of the tourist offer in Wells, and for visitor expenditure to be increased most probably through extending the length of stay as opposed to increasing the total number of visitors.

Baseline Data:

- City's economy has high reliance on visitors.
- Key parts of heritage rely on visitor income to sustain their activities.
- Mendip provides £19,000 pa to Wells TIC
- 250,000 visitors to Cathedral (one of biggest attraction in Somerset) and 43,000 to Bishop's Palace (2006)
- 250,000 visitors to Wookey Hole.
- 88 hotel rooms in four hotels in Wells. Good supply of B&B
- Wookey Hole is building new 58 bed hotel due to open Easter 2009. Hotels proposed by Centros Miller and for Clare's site.

The Local Needs:

Summary from Interviews:

- Visitors don't stay long
- Visitor spend is low (any evidence of this?)
- Elderly visitors go straight from coach to attraction
- Coach drop off gets congested
- Lack of coach parking
- Signage to the centre is poor
- Mendip doesn't invest as much in tourism as other authorities - underfunded and needs more promotion;

- Questionable if the infrastructure is in place to retain visitors. There should be more to Wells than just the Cathedral - but it just doesn't exist.
- Most visitors only come for half a day to visit the Cathedral;
- Lack of visitor accommodation.

LDF consultation:

No comments directly relating to tourism

A Vision for Wells:

Visitors will be a key part of the local economy. There will be many options to stay in the city overnight, and attractions in addition to the Cathedral and Bishop's Palace.

Aims:

- 7.1 To constantly improve the quality of the visitor experience
- 7.2 To increase visitor expenditure per head
- 7.3 To improve marketing of Wells as a visitor destination

Objectives:

- A. Work with attractions, visitor focused businesses, and tourism agencies to identify opportunities to increase the length of visitor stays and increase expenditure
- B. Develop improved pedestrian signage within the city
- C. Provide new and accessible interpretation of the city's heritage
- D. Work with hotel operators to increase the number of beds in the city and enable full coaches to be accommodated with a view to increasing the length of visits
- E. Secure new resources for marketing Wells as a visitor destination with a focus on higher spending visitors.

APPENDIX 20 Heritage & Environment

Summary:

Heritage and local environmental quality are two of Wells' key strengths and are therefore deserving of protection from undue change. That said, the heritage is sometimes perceived as lifeless and irrelevant to some parts of the community.

There are some local concerns about litter and noise nuisance, and while these are clearly a concern from those people affected, they are low level compared to many other communities.

Baseline Data:

- Cathedral and Bishop's Palace are both Grade I listed buildings.
- Wells will be a gateway to the proposed Somerset Levels World Heritage Site.

The Local Needs:

Summary from Interviews:

- Quality of the environment is very high (because it doesn't have major transport links or industry)
- Heritage is a strength that attracts visitors, gives quality and is good for business
- People want to keep the heritage, but there is no vision for how to keep it
- Quiet and sleepy ambience
- A good place for the retired
- Some of the heritage is perceived as lifeless
- Cathedral has little significance to some residents
- Cathedral and Bishop's Palace are living entities, not lifeless historic sites
- Does the heritage provide a comfort zone which obscures other local issues?

LDF consultation:

- Dirty, untidy streets. Lack of enforcement for littering (especially Tesco area and Cathedral Green). Pavements disfigured by discarded chewing gum.
- Strong approval of city centre environment. Importance of preserving unique and attractive appearance.
- More tree planting. Maintenance of existing trees and prevention of any further felling.
- Blocked, inefficient drainage particularly in wet weather (High Street, St Andrews).

A Vision for Wells:

The heritage of Wells will be celebrated and accessed by the whole community. Environmental quality will be constantly improving.

Aims:

- 6.1 Protect the high quality environment and heritage of Wells
- 6.2 Increase involvement by those parts of the community currently 'excluded' from the city's heritage.

Objectives:

- A. Agree a comprehensive management plan for the city's heritage
- B. Identify opportunities for 'audience development' and to encourage more engagement in the city's heritage.

APPENDIX 21 Transport and Parking

Summary:

Transport and parking frequently attract the most comments in any public consultation, and Wells is no exception. Wells has traditionally fared better than other Mendip cities in having easily accessible employment and retail, due not least to the compact nature of the city and the relatively flat terrain. At the same time, however, the poor transport infrastructure surrounding Wells plus the cost of public transport means that it has a relatively high dependence upon the car by commuters and visitors.

Despite Wells attracting a high volume of visitors, there is some evidence that there is an adequate supply of parking in the city overall, although it may not always be in the precise location that drivers require.

There are ongoing complaints about traffic management (in particular traffic lights) on the relief road. This may be trivial and the voice of a small minority, but if there are simple measures to improve traffic flow then they should be pursued.

It should also be born in mind that successful cities are busy and therefore tend to be congested, that parking is presented as a problem in every city in England, that everyone ideally wants free parking outside the place they're going, that increasing the volume of parking will rarely satisfy all the demand, that people are generally reluctant on the part of many people to walk or use public transport and finally that the problems of congestion and parking will continue until car usage declines.

Baseline Data:

- In 2001, residents of Wells were much more likely to work within 2km of home than people in Mendip, the South West or England. Overall, 39% worked within 2km, with the figure rising to 45% for residents of Central ward. This compares to 25% for Mendip and

20% for England. However, a larger proportion were also likely to travel 20-30km to work (11% for Wells, compared to 8% for Mendip and 4% for the South West). It is likely that the distance travelled to work has increased since 2001, in particular because of the closure of many local large employers, but also because of a national trend towards longer commuting distances.

- In 2005/06, 18% of people walked to do their main food shopping. The next highest level in Mendip was Glastonbury at 13%. (source: Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, 2006, Retail and city centre uses study)
- There are 691 car parking spaces operated by Mendip District Council in Wells, a number similar to Frome but considerably more than Glastonbury's 387. In addition there are privately operated car parks and on-street parking.
- Lack of parking was identified as a dislike of shopping in Wells by 7.4% of shoppers questioned. 2.1% identified congestion as a problem. (source: Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, 2006, Retail and city centre uses study)
- The geography of Wells is flat and compact meaning that it can be engaged on foot.
- The absence of a train station restricts development of alternatives to driving.
- Bus services run to Bristol, Bath, Weston-S-M, Bridgwater and Taunton via local cities.

The Local Needs:

Summary from Interviews:

- Even on peak August days there are still parking places available.
- Having successful businesses and institutions (like the Cathedral School) in the city centre will inevitably cause a parking problem
- People complain about lack of parking
- Bishops Palace loses conference and wedding trade because of lack of parking in proximity
- Congestion
- Few cycling facilities
- Limited coach drop-off and parking facilities
- Complaints about traffic management on the relief road
- Road infrastructure is not good
- Many people commute to work elsewhere, and spend their money elsewhere

- There is very little signage to the centre
- Very little public transport.

LDF consultation:

- Requirement for a system of properly maintained cycle and footpath in and around the city and linking villages in the wider environs. A371 unsafe route for pedestrians and cyclists. Routes suggested to the city from Wookey, Cheddar, the Horringtons.
- Strong support for Park & Ride scheme to reduce city traffic and free up limited parking.
- General promotion needed of public transport to reduce increasingly heavy traffic in and around the city.
- Improve inadequate bus service, more routes, more frequency, later running and cheaper fares. Work with the providers to ensure this (particular mention of lack of cheap return fares before 9am, discouraging commuters from using public transport)
- Transport policy needs to control increasingly heavy HGV traffic in villages and residential areas.
- Parking too expensive/should be free (added benefit of encouraging more visitors to the city)
- Too many traffic lights delaying traffic. Consider replacing with roundabouts.
- Roads and pavements in a poor state of repair.
- Poor connections to railway station (Cary). Regular co-ordinated services required
- Dangerous threat from speeding vehicles/boy racers in the city (especially at night).

A Vision for Wells:

Wells will have rates of walking and cycling that are on a par with the best in Europe. Public transport will enable people to easily and cheaply reach services in other settlements. There will be high quality transport facilities for visitors.

Aims:

- 5.1 Encourage residents to drive less
- 5.2 Improve arrangements for tourist coach drop-offs
- 5.3 Improve quality of public transport
- 5.4 Improve traffic management and car park information.

Objectives:

- A. Develop a long term and sustained campaign to encourage residents to walk and cycle more, and drive less with a view to reducing congestion and use of car parks.
- B. Invest in and improve cycle facilities in Wells
- C. Work with planners, developers, businesses and key agencies to improve the diversity and quality of local services and employment opportunities with a view to reducing the need to travel out of Wells.
- D. Work with public transport providers and agencies to improve quality, frequency and cost of services according to local need.
- E. Work with Somerset County Council to review traffic management arrangements, e.g. on the relief road, and recommend improvements.

APPENDIX 22 Health, Leisure and Community

Baseline Data:

- The nearest hospital is the 36 bed West Mendip Community Hospital in Glastonbury. This includes a 24 hr minor injury unit.
- There are two GP surgeries (with a total of 13 doctors) and five dental practices in Wells.
- In 2001, 67% of Wells residents described themselves as being in good health, slightly lower than the district (70%), regional and national statistics. 24% described themselves as being in "fairly good health" and, in line with the other areas, 9% said they had "not good health".
- In February 2007 there were 417 incapacity benefit and disablement allowance claimants in Wells, a marginally higher proportion of the population than Mendip as a whole. Half had been claiming for over five years, half were aged 25-49 and nearly half were suffering from mental disorders (5-7% higher than other areas). The highest number of claimants were in St Cuthbert's ward (240) and the lowest in Central ward (70).
- In 2001, 27% of residents in Central ward had a limiting long term illness, compared to 20% in St Cuthbert's and 17% in St Thomas. In England the figure is 18%.
- In common with district, regional and national statistics, about 10% of residents are involved in caring (2001).

- 27% of people go to a leisure centre more than once a month, the highest level in Mendip. Equally, the proportion of people who never go to a leisure centre is, at 59%, the lowest in Mendip. (source: Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, 2006, Retail and city centre uses study)
- Elim is taking over management of the White Building to create Wells' first community centre
- Children's Centre proposed but not yet developed.

The Local Needs:

Summary from Interviews:

- Facilities and leisure in and around Wells are good
- A very good community spirit
- A lot of community level activity
- Poor communication & collaboration between community and voluntary groups.

LDF consultation:

- Hard to get a GP appointment. Ageing population means more surgeries required.
- Improve public transport to regional hospitals – nearest A&E is 25 miles away.
- Need community facilities to provide a focal point (e.g. local neighbourhood halls)
- Bridge age gaps, promote a community spirit. There's a need for promotion of community involvement
- Stop demonising the young, encourage young and older people to get to know each other
- New housing developments must be matched by sustainable facilities and amenities for the increased population
- Leisure centre inaccessible due to poor bus link. This is having a detrimental effect on health (especially amongst older residents).

A Vision for Wells:

Wells will have a healthy population that is nevertheless easily able to access high quality healthcare when required. There will be a comprehensive range of community and leisure facilities that can be readily accessed from all parts of the city.

Aims:

- 8.1 To maintain and develop a high standard of health care in Wells
- 8.2 To support and invest in community services

8.3 To achieve a more cohesive community

Objectives:

- A. Increase the accessibility of existing community facilities through marketing, improved transport, staff support etc.
- B. Ensure that new community, leisure and health facilities are developed and provided as the population of Wells grows.
- C. Initiate actions that bring parts of the community together that are currently divided by age, geography, class and other barriers in order to build respect and understanding.
- D. Improve levels of support for young families e.g. child care, play facilities, out of school activities
- E. Establish a communication network to improve coordination between the various voluntary and community organisations working in the city.

APPENDIX 23 Wealth, Safety and Exclusion

Summary:

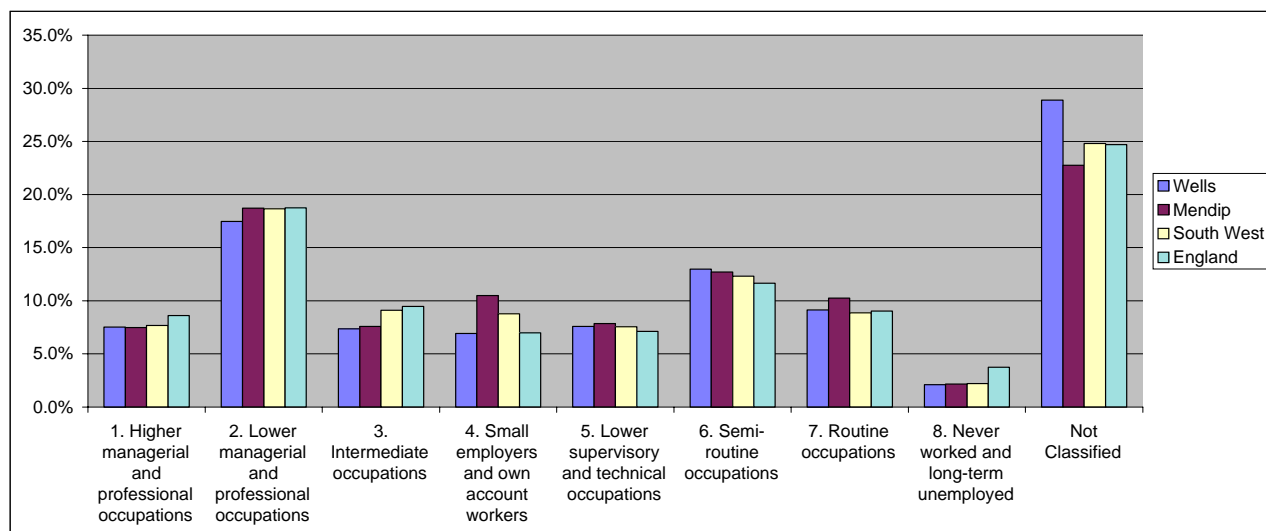
Wells is perceived by many to be a wealthy and privileged city. This perception is reinforced by the status of institutions such as Wells Cathedral and Wells Cathedral School. The perception is not, however, altogether accurate. The level of managerial jobs is not as high as might be expected, household wealth is lower than the regional average, and the level of households with no access to a car is higher than is found across Mendip as a whole. While these figures may well have changed since the census was conducted in 2001, the extent of change is unlikely to have reversed the profile. The interviews indicated a level of need amongst small parts of the community that may even be masked by the official data with problems relating to low incomes, unemployment, substance abuse and homelessness. The indication was that parts of Wells society are blind to these realities.

Baseline Data:

Social Class

- In 2001 the proportion of the population aged 16-74 in managerial jobs was slightly lower than England as a whole, with the proportion of lower managerial jobs lower than Mendip and the South West as well. The same applies to intermediate occupations and small employers. There was, however, a markedly greater proportion of people who are 'not classified'. This includes people who are full

time students, short term unemployed, sick and disabled, looking after the home or who could not be classified for any other reason.



- St Thomas ward has the highest proportion of people in managerial roles, while St Cuthbert’s has more people in lower skilled occupations.

Household Wealth

- In 2001, total household income averaged £21,700 in Wells, which was £3000 below the South West average. The highest average income levels (£470 per week) were in St Thomas ward and the lowest (£380 per week) were in Central ward.
- In 2001, 26% of households in Wells had no access to a car. The highest level of no-car households was in Central ward (32%) while the lowest level was in St Thomas (19%). Across Mendip only 16% of households had no access to a car.
- In February 2008 there were 260 income support claimants in Wells. Over half lived in St Cuthbert’s with the lowest proportion living in Central ward.
- The highest level of lone parent households in 2001 was in St Cuthbert (6%) while the lowest level was in St Thomas (4%).

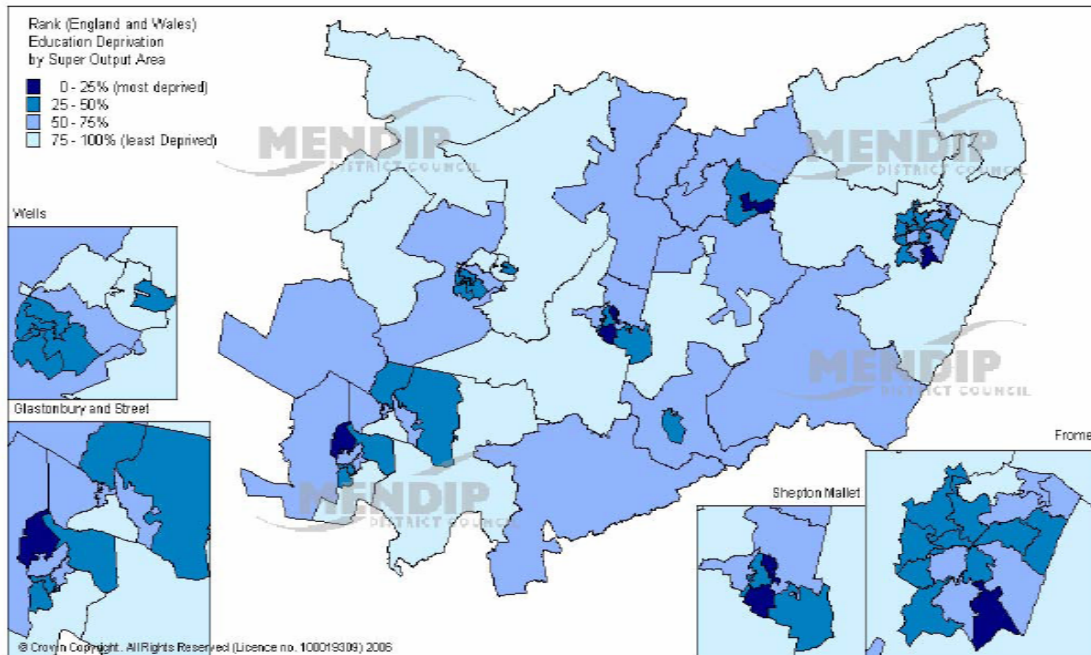
Safety

- In 2004 there was twice the level of domestic violence incidents in St Cuthbert’s (3.4 per thousand households) as in St Thomas. There were no incidents in Central ward.

Deprivation

- The 2007 Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that, of the seven output areas in Wells, three are amongst the 50% most deprived

areas in Mendip but only one, part of St Cuthbert's ward, is in ten most deprived areas. The Wells Central ward is the 18th most deprived area in Mendip and is at the 50% mark for English areas. Part of St Thomas ward is the third least deprived area in Mendip, and is in the 10% least deprived areas in England.



- Spencer House – 8-bed supported housing project operated by YMCA for 16-25 year olds. Project staff help young people prepare for living independently and accessing move on accommodation.

The Local Needs:

Summary from Interviews:

- No major crime; high perception of safety
- Very little litter, graffiti and anti-social behaviour
- There is a small but significant level of disadvantage in Wells with acute needs for support
- Social exclusion and poverty is dispersed throughout the city and is subtle
- Wells does not have a good record of dealing with disadvantage - voluntary activity tends not to be focused on local charity
- A lot of low income families and a lack of employment for the unskilled
- Older people often ignore and reject young people
- There is a lack of opportunity for people at the lower end of the social scale, and a lack of provision

- Noticeable level of substance abuse that is growing
- No facilities for people from Wells who find themselves homeless.

LDF consultation:

- Tesco/bus station area – lunchtime and evening noise nuisance, intimidation and litter from schoolchildren and youths
- Cathedral Green – frequent noise, ball games, drunkenness and intimidation are making this important area unattractive
- Noise nuisance generated by skateboard park disturbing residents of Lover’s Walk, Melbourne House Mews.

A Vision for Wells:

Levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in Wells will be low compared to other cities in Mendip. The fact that some people suffer disadvantage is recognised and support for them is provided through agencies and voluntary effort.

Aims:

- 9.1 To ensure that Wells remains a safe and relatively trouble free community
- 9.2 To provide the support needed by disadvantaged families and individuals
- 9.3 To rebalance the perception that Wells is an affluent community without any problems

Objectives:

- A. Maintain a high level of communication and coordination between local authorities, police, youth service, businesses and other agencies
- B. Secure resources (financial, advisory etc) to ensure that the support needs of local families and individuals can be met
- C. To maintain data and evidence to ensure that the social needs of Wells are recognised by the relevant agencies and bodies and that they provide the level of service that is required.

APPENDIX 24 Delivery: A Plan and a Vision

This document provides a first step towards adopting a strategy for Wells. Before it can be realistically adopted as a strategy supported by the community as a whole, it must be the subject of consultation. This will need to ensure that it can engage more people than the ‘usual suspects’ and instead include all parts of the community.

Responsibility for delivery of this strategy is likely to fall with Wells City Council and Mendip District Council. It must be integrated into the work of the Local Strategic Partnership and the Local Development Framework.

Leadership will be a key factor in the success of the plan. Wells has been long handicapped by internal conflict and a continuous battle of ideas combined with a deep conservatism that can resist any change, despite local needs. This must be overcome if Wells is to take control of its own destiny and stop being led by interests outside the city. Cities on the continent have benefited from strong and decisive leadership and while the rules of local governance are somewhat different in England, there are nevertheless clear examples of cities and cities that have thrived when strong, focused and charismatic leaders have emerged at the helm.

A shortage of resources have also hampered new initiatives in Wells. And yet three key institutions are currently undertaking or planning to undertake building programmes worth £19m in the heritage core, proposed retail investment will likely exceed £40m, and the redevelopment of three industrial sites will cost many millions more. So Wells does attract investment and funding, but how it is spent is not given direction or coordination by the community. A clear and supported strategy will go some way to addressing this, as will strong leadership and negotiation to push the needs of the community as a whole.

A Vision for the Future

Based on the interviews and the available data, two potential scenarios can be painted for Wells.

A positive future	A negative future
<p>Wells is successful at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coordinating its activities • working to a common vision <p>Wells retains its high-quality environment but is also</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • known for its music, its food and its technology-based businesses • a city that attracts young families to live 	<p>Wells becomes a community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dominated by the rich and the elderly • with little local employment, • with attitudes that are firmly stuck in the past, • that is hostile to young people, • with no common vision. <p>Wells will:</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a place where people spend their money locally in a strong retail offer <p>Wells will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide good employment opportunities at all levels, • a range of housing that meets all needs, • and gain a lot of wealth from its visitors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a declining heritage core surrounded by growing housing estates, • have a declining retail area • attract visitors who only stay for a short period of time and spend very little.
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Both of these visions are inevitably informed by external factors, not least political and administrative decisions, and the free market. New house building and population growth in Wells is highly probable, as it is in most of England. Large scale employers will probably not return. Strategic decision making is likely to be focused at sub-regional to national and international levels, as opposed to the local. Retailing might continue to be dominated by multiples and international brands, although increasing distribution costs could impact upon this. The increasing cost of oil will change transportation habits and could result in a fall both in commuting and visitor numbers.

The challenge for the city plan are about how to manages and direct these external pressures so that a positive vision is achieved, in preference to a negative one.