



Design and Access Statement



Figure 1. Fairfield Road, Dorchester, with road closure in place for market day

1. Background

- 1.1. Fairfield Road, Dorchester, is an important route for pedestrians moving around the town. It is the most direct, signposted route between the railway stations and the most direct route between Dorchester South station and the hospital. With the development at Brewery Square, Fairfield Road's role as a link through the town has been further enhanced.
- 1.2. Despite this strategic role in the local walking network, Fairfield Road has no dedicated pedestrian footway; everyone must use the carriageway, shared with considerable volumes of motor traffic accessing the car park.

- 1.3. Fairfield Road and the surrounding market areas are owned by Dorset Council, and leased to the Dorchester Markets Informal Joint Panel, which in turn permits the space to be laid out for car parking for much of the week, taking a share of the revenue from the car parking.
- 1.4. The proposed changes will create a new footway on the northern side of the road, giving people on foot or using mobility aids a safe route between the car park and town centre amenities. It also proposes closing the eastern end of the road, reducing conflicts between pedestrians and traffic entering the car park, and enabling a new public space at the eastern end of Fairfield Road. The detailed design for this element is not presented as part of this application.
- 1.5. As part of the scheme, a small section of railing will also be removed opposite Copper Street to provide a direct route between the car park and the railway station, with the footway gradually ramped up to provide level access.
- 1.6. The scheme presented here is funded in part by a grant from the Department for Transport to enhance active travel. Funding is constrained by the recent increase in construction costs and the quality of the materials for much of the scheme will be limited to the standard palette adopted for highway schemes. The use of non-standard materials imposes both an immediate cost to the authority and a long-term maintenance liability.
- 1.7. Subject to further funding, a range of different materials may be possible for the subsequent public realm element, which would be subject to different maintenance arrangements.

2. Site context

- 2.1. The site lies approximately 200 metres to the south of the town centre of Dorchester and around 20 metres to the west of the Brewery Square area – see Figure 3 below for the wider context.
- 2.2. Brewery Square is a mixed-use development area still under construction, as outlined under policy DOR6 in the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan 2015.
- 2.3. A Development Brief for the Weymouth Avenue site from 2004 set out the need for improvements to the pedestrian and cycle network in the area, including linking to Dorchester West station, making the following statement:

“Safe pedestrian and cycle route/s will be sought within the Weymouth Avenue Area, linking to the station and areas beyond the boundaries of the site including the town centre, Fordington, Manor Park, Maumbury Rings, and Fairfield (and on to Dorchester West station and Borough Gardens).” p. iv
- 2.4. Fairfield Road runs for 130m on a north west – south east alignment, linking Maumbury Road with Weymouth Avenue. It is around 11 metres wide, with parking on both sides of the road and a two-way, 6 metre wide carriageway.
- 2.5. Around 400-500 vehicles per day use the road as a through route, while up to 2,000 vehicles use Fairfield Road to access the car park on non-market days.



Figure 2. View of Fairfield Road from Dray Horse Yard, looking west

- 2.6. At the junction with Weymouth Avenue, counts conducted in December 2022 showed 3,500 pedestrians per day crossed the road in the 12 hours from 0700-1900, with a considerable number crossing later in the evening. 71% of those crossing used the puffin crossing north of Dray Horse Yard, but the remainder – almost 1000 people – crossed directly between Dray Horse Yard and Fairfield Road, choosing not to use the crossing. The proportion making this movement rose towards the evening, likely reflecting the fact that those crossing were aiming for Brewery Square rather than the town centre.
- 2.7. On the northwestern side of the site, Fairfield Road is bounded by the rear brick wall of the South Linneys, historically used as stalls for livestock to be traded at the market. On the northeastern side the wall stands only as a boundary, falling near the Weymouth Avenue junction to just over a metre high, with iron railings mounted onto the brick wall.
- 2.8. To the south side of the road there is a level difference between the road and the car park beyond, separated by a fence constructed of poles and concrete posts, mounted on a retaining structure of varying materials, through which several pedestrian access points from the car park have been created, ramping down to Fairfield Road.
- 2.9. Midway between Maumbury Road and Weymouth Avenue an opening in the north side of the wall gives vehicular access to an area which includes the North and South Linneys and other structures, which historically was the location for the livestock market, and is used for most of the week as a car park.

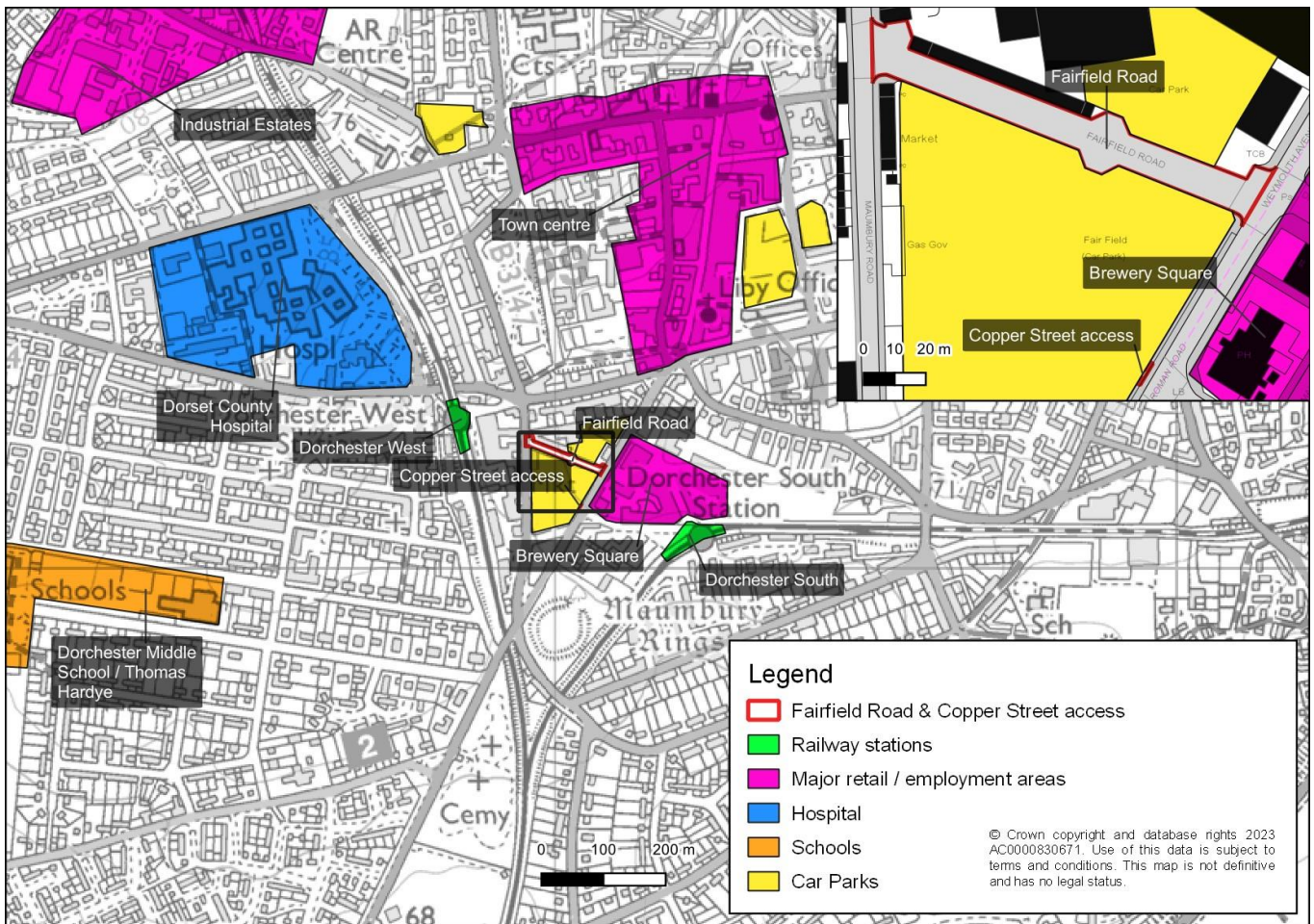


Figure 3. Key locations in and around Fairfield Road

3. Collision history at the site

- 3.1. Collision records reported to the police indicate a problem at the Weymouth Avenue junction. Here three pedestrians have been injured, two seriously, in collision with vehicles turning out of Fairfield Road.
- 3.2. Two reasons appear to lie behind this – firstly, as set out above, on peak days around 1,000 pedestrians (29% of the total) cross directly between Dray Horse Yard and Fairfield Road, rather than using the puffin crossing located 25 metres to the north on Weymouth Avenue. Secondly, traffic emerging from Fairfield Road has limited visibility looking south, and may therefore be unlikely to spot pedestrians crossing in this location.
- 3.3. In part to respond to this concern, the proposal included closing the Weymouth Avenue / Fairfield Road junction to motor vehicle access, although some access could still be permitted if needed for maintenance purposes. Closing this end of the road to movement in and out of the car park by motor traffic removes the risks to pedestrians from turning traffic and reduces vehicle movements in the area around Dray Horse Yard, which acts as the major access point for the Brewery Square development.
- 3.4. By restricting access for vehicles, space can also be re-designed to provide planters, benches and potentially other improvements, such as a rain garden to slow surface water entering the drainage system – this is set out in more detail below.
- 3.5. Concerns were expressed during the consultation that motor traffic resulting from a restriction on the Weymouth Avenue end would be redirected to alternative routes, particularly Upper

Fairfield Road, which, similarly to Fairfield Road, has no footway. There is no record of pedestrian collisions in this area. By providing a pedestrian route directly from the car park to the Copper Street junction, the need for pedestrians to use Upper Fairfield Road will be reduced.

4. Current access arrangements

- 4.1. Access by foot and vehicle, together with the routes from the car park to nearby destinations is set out in figure 4 below, which also shows the proposed changes in access.
- 4.2. Fairfield Road is not a part of the public highway. Historical maps show that the road from Maumbury Road to Weymouth Avenue was gated at both ends, presumably linked to the area's function as a livestock market – see Figures 5 and 6 below.
- 4.3. The road is laid out as an access route to the Fairfield Road car parks, with car parking on either side of the road and no footways. This means pedestrians must share the road with vehicles, potentially presenting challenges to many pedestrians, particularly those with mobility or sensory impairments.
- 4.4. The road's non-public status means it more easily be repurposed for the Dorchester weekly market, on Wednesday mornings, as well as for less frequent Sunday car boot events, with the whole of the covered market area in use by stallholders.
- 4.5. Vehicle access to the car parks can be made from Maumbury Road, Weymouth Avenue and Upper Fairfield Road. During the market periods vehicle access can only be made from Upper Fairfield Road access.
- 4.6. For pedestrians aiming to get to the railway station from Fairfield car park, they must either exit onto Fairfield Road, or leave using the vehicle access on Upper Fairfield Road. A potential more direct route would be to use the Copper Street crossing, directly from the car park.

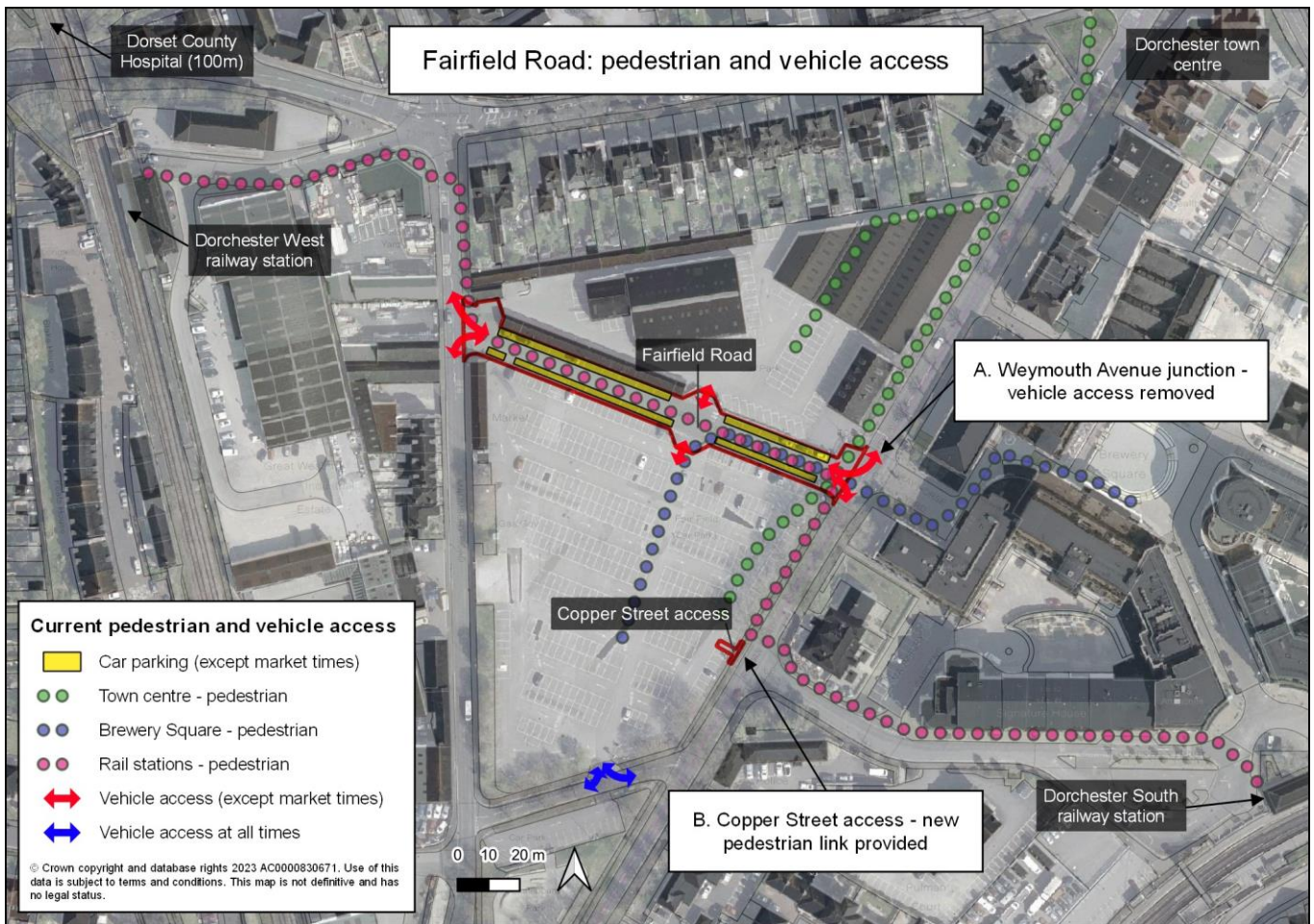


Figure 4. Pedestrian and vehicle access arrangements

5. Proposed access arrangements: Fairfield Road

- 5.1. In addition to the general movement patterns as set out in figure 4, the layout plan for Fairfield Road is set out in drawing *HI1290_1_101_DD_General Arrangement.pdf*
- 5.2. Pedestrian access will be improved along the length of Fairfield Road through the provision of a 2.5m wide footways, which will preserve the continuity of the footway across the mouth of the northern car park entrance.
- 5.3. At the Maumbury Road junction with Fairfield Road vehicle access will be maintained both to the area of parking near the café and into Fairfield Road itself, however, pedestrian safety here will be improved by increasing the footway available to pedestrians and narrowing the available carriageway. A marked, accessible, uncontrolled crossing will permit visually and mobility impaired users to navigate the space more safely.
- 5.4. From the car park entrances east to the Weymouth Avenue junction the road will be closed to vehicles using bollards, with pedestrian (and cycle) access maintained. This area will, in future, also benefit from improvements to create habitat improvements, integrated with measures to slow run-off from the car park into the drainage network.
- 5.5. Drivers of vehicles seeking to travel between Maumbury Avenue and Weymouth Avenue in this area (of which there are around 500 per day according to counts) will need to require alternative routes, such as Great Western Road, or Upper Fairfield Road. For those seeking to park at Fairfield Road coming from the east on Weymouth Avenue, they will need to travel onwards to Upper Fairfield Road and use the car park entrance there. This is the route all drivers currently need to follow during the operational hours of the markets.

5.6. Pedestrian movements along Weymouth Avenue will benefit from removing the conflict with turning movements in and out of Fairfield Road.

6. Proposed access arrangements: Copper Street pedestrian route

6.1. The layout plan for the proposed arrangement at the Copper Street access is set out in drawing *HI1290_1_102_DD_General Arrangement Copper Street.pdf*

6.2. The opening in the railings opposite the Copper Street and Weymouth Avenue junction will permit a more direct access point to the puffin crossing at Copper Street, providing a clearer route from the car park to the railway station, and reducing conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles at the Upper Fairfield Road access to the car park.

6.3. A 2.7m panel will be removed from the fence adjacent to the ticket machine, with a parking bay removed to give a clear route for users. The footway on Weymouth Avenue will be raised with a slight ramp extending in either direction along the footway to enable a level access into the car park.

6.4. There will be no change to vehicle access other than the reduction in one parking bay to provide the space for pedestrian movement.



Figure 5. NLS OS Six Inch, 1888-1913, reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland



Figure 6. NLS OS 1:500 Towns series, 1840s-1890s

7. Heritage and archaeology

- 7.1. Fairfield Road sits within the Dorchester Conservation Area, which encompasses much of the historic town centre, stretching from Maumbury Rings in the south of the town, the Roman town centre and neighbouring settlement of Fordington, as well as the Victorian streets around the edges of the town.
- 7.2. The nearest Listed Buildings are those of the Eldridge & Pope Bonded Warehouse and Bottling Stores, Office Block and Gate Piers, located on the other side of Weymouth Avenue from Fairfield Road.
- 7.3. Features of interest on the road itself are limited. The rear of the South Linneys present an unbroken English-bond grey brick façade for much of the length of the north road, stepping down with the gradient of the road by 300-400mm every 15m accented with a red brick banding. On the southern side of the road a granite horse trough is inset into the wall of the car park – see figure 7. This feature is typically blocked by parked cars and thus is somewhat neglected.
- 7.4. Previous archaeological investigations have revealed the presence of artefacts of some significance within the northern part of the car park near the boundary with Weymouth Avenue (Mason, 2009). There will be no deep excavations associated with the initial phase of the work, however, subsequent measures to enhance the public realm (not part of this application) could involve planting of trees or more substantive changes to sub-surface drainage in this area which is likely to require archaeological supervision.

7.5. The quality of the historic environment is diminished by the abundance of car parking in the area. By removing the car parking and replacing it with a footway and public realm area, users will be able to better appreciate the space, particularly the walls of the South Linneys, the historic horse trough and views along the road towards Dray Horse Yard.



Figure 7. The granite horse trough located on the south side of Fairfield Road

8. Flood Risk Assessment

- 8.1. The area is not within Floodzones 2, 3 nor in an area susceptible to groundwater flooding. The area near the Weymouth Avenue junction is subject to a low risk of surface water flooding – see figure. Reduction in runoff here might help mitigate the more severe risk of surface water flooding found on Weymouth Avenue, South Walks Road and Charles Street.
- 8.2. Currently surface water from the upper car park and road drains to gullies at the junction with Weymouth Avenue.
- 8.3. This proposal does not include major resurfacing works to the carriageway and therefore no opportunities exist at this stage to reduce runoff through changes to surface drainage. The only change to the area is the creation of a footway, which will alter the location of the where surface water drains. One gully will be moved to the front of the new footway near the junction with Weymouth Avenue. Drainage arrangements are set out in drawing *HI1290_1_501_DD_Drainage*.

8.4. Contingent on design and funding, the public realm area to be considered under a separate application could incorporate features to reduce water intake through the inclusion of rain gardens, tree pits or another sustainable urban drainage systems.



Figure 8. Surface water flood risk map of the area (gov.uk)

9. Biodiversity

- 9.1. A Highways Ecology Report was prepared for the scheme by the Natural Environment Team at Dorset Council – see document entitled: *Fairfield road improvements PEA report 140923*.
- 9.2. This report found that: *“It is not considered that the proposed works to Fairfield Road will cause any significant impacts (direct or indirect) to any designated or non-designated site in proximity, and as such, as not considered further in this report.”*
- 9.3. The report makes recommendations for enhancements to the site for biodiversity, but these improvements will have to be provided as part of the public realm area, proposals for which will be submitted as part of a subsequent application.

10. Design

- 10.1. Surfacing on the western side of Weymouth Avenue as far as the private access into Dukes Auctioneers is currently made up of buff-coloured slabs, which has been used as a footway surface on many recent schemes in the central part of Dorchester, including High West Street, Princes Street and New Street. The proposed scheme extends this surface southwards across the mouth of Fairfield Road, where the footway continues as an asphalt (blacktop) footway southwards towards Maumbury Cross junction.

- 10.2. The new footway from the carpark entrance west to the Maumbury Road junction will be surfaced as blacktop, matching much of the rest of the footways in the area, such as Maumbury Road, Great Western Road, Prince of Wales Road.
- 10.3. Bollards to protect footways from incursions and to restrict vehicle movement will use the typical 'cannon' style currently used in Dray Horse Yard in the Brewery Square area and along Weymouth Avenue. These will be fixed where no vehicle access is required, and demountable where needed to permit access.
- 10.4. A detailed design for the public realm area will be confirmed once funding is in place. Initial discussions have included a rain garden and/or additional street trees to act as a sustainable drainage system, together with benches, cycle parking and an enhancement to the setting of the granite horse trough.

11. Previous consultation

- 11.1. A public engagement exercise outlining the proposed changes to the road was undertaken from 16th February to 17th March 2023 online with paper versions available in public buildings in Dorchester.
- 11.2. 415 responses were received, 71% of which were from residents of Dorchester, and a further 26% residents from outside Dorchester. A report into the public engagement exercise was published by Dorset Council in May 2023 (Dorset Council, 2023). This report, together with an Appendix of all comments, has been included in the application as a Community Involvement Statement.
- 11.3. The engagement exercise asked respondents' views on the following:
- creating a footway on Fairfield Road
 - reducing car parking provision
 - improved crossings of side roads
 - a new pedestrian entry into the car park from Copper Street
 - removing vehicle access from the eastern (Weymouth Avenue) end of the street, and
 - the potential for benches, better street lighting and potential space for planting.
- 11.4. Every aspect of the scheme was supported by respondents, ranging from 89% for the provision of a footway, to 65% to the proposal to restrict vehicle access at the eastern end at Weymouth Avenue. In every case, those expressing disagreement was low, from 22% disagreeing with the vehicle restriction to 3% disagreeing with improved street lighting or safer crossing points of the road at junctions.

12. References

Dorset Council, *Fairfield Road Improvements Consultation Response Report*. May 2023.
<https://consultation.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/transport-policy/fairfield-road/>

Mason, C, *Land at Middle Fairfield, Dorchester, Dorset: An Archaeological Field Evaluation for West Dorset District Council*. Context One Archaeological Services. November 2009

West Dorset District Council and Weymouth & Portland Borough Councils, *West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan*. October 2015

West Dorset District Council, *Weymouth Avenue Area Development Brief*. February 2004.
<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/documents/35024/296583/Weymouth+Avenue+Development+Brief+%282004%29.pdf/55899154-90e3-1260-22f6-48041634d9be>