



Planning Services

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Date: 19th May 2023

Ref: P/PAP/2023/00199

Case Officer: Jim Bennett

Team: Northern

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* Jim.Bennett@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Dear Madam,

Application Number: P/PAP/2023/00199

Location: Fairfield Car Park Dorchester DT1 1QW

Proposal: Dorset Highways Fairfield Road access improvements

Pre-application type: Written response/Site meeting and written response

Thank you for your pre-application enquiry received complete on the 20 April 2023 requesting officer advice. My advice is based upon assessment of the information you have provided and following an officer site visit.

Our recommendation (summary):

The proposals appear to be acceptable in principle. A planning application would be the next step to enable formal consideration of the proposal, but more detail is required in respect of the comments set out below in the Planning Assessment Section.

Background

Submitted plans/details:

Drawing no. HI1290/02/03/A - Opening in Car Park Fence

Drawing no. HI1290/002/01/Orig - Consultation Option

Relevant site constraints:

LB - Grade: II Listed Building: GATEPIERS BETWEEN OFFICE BLOCK AND OLD BOTTLING STORES List Entry: 1290748.0; - Distance: 19.81

CON - Application is within a Dorchester Conservation Area - Distance: 0

Planning Service privacy notice can be found at:

www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/your-council/about-your-council/data-protection/service-privacy-notices/planning.aspx

EA - Risk of Surface Water Flooding Extent 1 in 100 and 1 in 1000- Distance: 0

EA - JBA - Risk of Groundwater Emergence; Groundwater levels are between 0.5m and 5m below the ground surface.; There is a risk of flooding to subsurface assets but surface manifestation of groundwater is unlikely.; - Distance: 0

DESI - Scheduled Monument: Henge, Romano-British amphitheatre and Civil War fieldworks known collectively as Maumbury Rings (List Entry: 1003204); - Distance: 13.4

Relevant site history:

WD/D/15/001023 - Decision: GRA - Decision Date: 28/10/2016 - New covered market area to the west of Dukes Auctioneers. Proposed link building between existing indoor market building and North Linneys & partial reconstruction of roof to North Linneys (Re-submission of 1/D/11/000114)

WD/D/15/002315 - Decision: GRA - Decision Date: 28/10/2016 - Additional use of indoor market, North and South Linneys and associated link building for market uses on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, 1000 to 1600 hrs

WD/D/18/000373 - Decision: RES - Decision Date: 13/03/2018 - Pre-application consultation - Upgrades to Fairfeild carpark including new fence, CCTV around building, replacement roof, installation of lights, installation of gates, replacements doors.

WD/D/18/001414 - Decision: GRA - Decision Date: 11/10/2018 - Erect gates, replace ridge to main building, replace cladding to gable ends, erect fence to front of North Linney and move pedestrian gate to Weymouth Avenue

1/E/80/000729 - Decision: GRA - Decision Date: 05/09/1980 - CONSTRUCTION OF NEW MARKET BUILDING

Relevant planning policies:

Adopted West Dorset and Weymouth & Portland Local Plan: The following policies are considered to be relevant to this proposal:

- INT1 - Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development
- ENV2 - Wildlife and Habitats
- ENV3 – Green Infrastructure Network
- ENV4 - Heritage assets
- ENV5 – Flood Risk
- ENV10 - The landscape and townscape setting
- ENV11 – The pattern of streets and spaces
- ENV16 - Amenity
- COM7- Creating a safe & efficient transport network
- DOR3 – Dorchester Roman Town Area
- DOR6 - Weymouth Avenue Brewery Site

Emerging Dorset Local Plan

The Dorset Council Local Plan Options Consultation took place between January and March 2021. Being at a very early stage of preparation, the Draft Dorset Council Local Plan should be accorded very limited weight in decision making.

Supplementary Planning Documents

- Dorchester Neighbourhood Plan
- Dorchester Conservation Area Appraisal
- Weymouth Avenue Development Brief

Planning Assessment

The proposal

Dorset Council seek to enhance active travel and improve pedestrian safety on Fairfield Road, Dorchester, having received grant funding from the Department for Transport's (DfT) Active Travel Fund, by improving pedestrian accessibility and safety to/from Fairfield Car Park. With almost 600 spaces, Fairfield Car Park generates substantial levels of vehicular and pedestrian traffic along the road, but has no dedicated pedestrian footway, with walkers and wheelchair-users forced to use the road.

Fairfield Road is privately owned by the Council, with parking spaces along it provided as part of the off-street Fairfield Car Park provision. It 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. A footway separated from traffic will give pedestrians, particularly disabled people, a safe route between the car park and town centre amenities. The proposed design would improve the accessibility and safety of the route by:

- Creating a wide footway along the length of Fairfield Road
- Providing safer crossing points across Fairfield Road at junctions
- Installing a new access into the car park directly from the railway station (from Copper Street)
- Providing better street lighting on Fairfield Road
- Restricting vehicle access to Fairfield Road at the Weymouth Avenue end, creating a pedestrianised space in this busy area
- Providing environmental enhancements

Drivers would access the car park from Maumbury Road or Upper Fairfield Road. It is proposed to remove 21 existing car parking spaces from the car park in order to facilitate the development.

Potential additional improvements to the eastern end and the provision of planting and benches will require subsequent funding and will be the subject of further design work. This would be a future phase of work.

Principle of development

The principle of development is in line with Policy DOR6 (Weymouth Avenue Brewery Site), which seeks provision of effective open spaces and pedestrian cycle links connecting the Brewery Site with adjoining areas, although the material considerations set out below will need to be addressed by your planning application.

Impact on the character of the area and trees

The proposal site is currently hardstanded in its entirety and overall the proposal represents an opportunity to introduce a design that will enhance the character and appearance of the area. A Design and Access Statement (D&A) must be submitted with your application to explain the design rationale of the proposal and to demonstrate the benefits of the scheme. The D&A may encompass other aspects of the scheme referred to under the following headings to ensure all aspects of the proposal are properly considered.

The application site does not contain any significant landscaping features that would be lost as a result of the development. However, your plans should provide details of any landscaping features and any new planting. It may be the case that trees provide the best opportunity for enhancement of the street scene, rather than planters in isolation, in accordance with paragraph 131 of the NPPF. Nevertheless and notwithstanding funding availability, details of proposed planting, planters, bollards, paving, lighting and boundary treatments should be made known at the planning stage.

With regard to paving, it is unclear from your submission how the surface treatments will be finished – tarmac, permeable paving, paint or whether the pedestrian route along Fairfield Road will be a formal, raised pavement? The materials will need to be made known in your planning submission. It is suggested that paving and other street furniture takes a cue from the Dray Horse Yard development opposite, to provide continuity in terms of surface treatment, bollards, bins, planting etc. It is not clear why the pedestrian access from the car park opposite Copper Street is in that location, rather than directly opposite the Puffin Crossing. Nevertheless, it is noted that a section of the car park's distinctive railings will be removed to facilitate access, which could be considered harmful. Rather than dispose of the railings it would be beneficial to re-use them, perhaps by putting a radius on them, to lead pedestrians into/out of the car park. It would be helpful if all of the proposals (opposite Dray Horse Yard and opposite Copper Street) were included on a single plan.

It does not appear that the proposal would impact on any of the protected Lime Trees on Weymouth Avenue, but if surface works encroach upon the root protection areas of these important trees then an arboricultural method statement/tree protection plan is required.

Impact on heritage assets and archaeology

The site is within Dorchester Conservation area, within the setting of the listed Brewery buildings opposite and the defined Dorchester Roman Town Area, so your D&A should acknowledge the impact the proposal will have on identified heritage assets, through incorporation of a heritage section, which addresses those points

It is not apparent how deep any excavations will go in relation to the proposed scheme, with regard to service trenches, drainage, planting, surfacing etc, but the car park is within 14m of a Scheduled Monument: Henge, Romano-British amphitheatre and Civil War fieldworks known collectively as Maumbury Rings. It is therefore recommended that the D&A acknowledges the potential for archaeological interest on the site, which might at the very least require an archaeological watching brief over any significant excavations.

Impact on neighbouring amenity

The proposal will have no adverse impact upon adjoining amenity being well separated from adjoining residential occupiers. However, the relationship of the proposal to Dukes Auctioneers will be a consideration, if use of the vehicular access to Weymouth Avenue in front of the Auctioneers is to be intensified. It is not clear how this entrance is to be utilised.

Impact on protected species

The Council has a legal duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity. The proposal will not adversely impact upon biodiversity, due to limited opportunity for wildlife currently on the site. However, you will need to consider opportunities to promote biodiversity in accordance with Policy ENV2 (vi) of the Local Plan. It is noted that your submission mentions opportunities for habitat improvements, which will need to be elaborated upon in your planning submission. Provision of heavy standard native trees would represent the best opportunity for meaningful biodiversity net gain, but these will need an appropriate planting medium/tree pits to ensure the best chance of establishment. Planters could provide some, more limited opportunity for biodiversity enhancement. The Council provides online [Ecology Guidance](#) which can assist you in ensuring that your proposal is supported by the appropriate information to enable validation.

Highway Impacts

It is understood that a few hundred vehicles a day use Fairfield Road as a through route, when the road is open, which would need to find an alternative route - likely either Great Western Road or Upper Fairfield Road.

It is not apparent from the current submission how the current car park circulation arrangements will be affected, which would be helpful in determining any formal application. Is it intended to utilise the green coloured area on drawing no. H11290/002/01/Orig as egress only onto Weymouth Avenue?

Consultation with the Dorset Council Highways will be undertaken during consideration of the application, but the overall benefit of improving the safety of the route for all pedestrians, including car park users, is likely to outweigh the disbenefit of a little extra driving for some people in getting to the car park, as a cut through and loss of 21 car parking spaces.

Flood Risk and Drainage

The proposal site is in an area at Risk of Surface Water Flooding Extent 1 in 100 year and 1 in 1000 year. Furthermore the JBA Ground Water Mapping service identifies a Risk of Groundwater Emergence with groundwater levels between 0.5m and 5m below the ground surface, where there is a risk of flooding to subsurface assets, but surface manifestation of groundwater is unlikely. The proposal is not a flood vulnerable proposal and does not appear to propose a level of operational development that would increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. However the D&A should include a section on flood risk and any details you have on surface water drainage to address the surface and groundwater issues highlighted above. Use of permeable paving within the scheme and other SUDs measures could be a benefit of the scheme in terms of flood risk.

Statement of community involvement

It is noted that a consultation exercise was carried out earlier this year and the results of this are currently being reviewed. It would be helpful to your application if the outcome of the exercise is submitted as a supporting document as a Statement of Community Involvement.

Please note that the complete list of requirements for validation is set out in the [Council's validation checklist](#).

Next steps:

You will need to apply for planning permission. We encourage you to discuss the proposal with the Town Council prior to the submission of a planning application. In the event that a planning application is received we would consult with Dorchester Town Council, Conservation, Archaeologist, LFRA, Highways and Ecologist who may require further information.

The Council endeavours to determine applications within 8 weeks. Consideration of the application would be delegated to officers but could be referred to the Planning Committee for consideration under the Council's scheme of delegation. Committee meetings for the area are held approximately once per month.

Further information:

The comments set out in this response represent the professional opinion of the officers involved. All advice is given in good faith, without prejudice and cannot guarantee the outcome of any subsequent application which will be subject to a period of consultation and public notification and may be decided at a Planning Committee. The local planning authority will only be bound where a formal application is submitted, and a formal decision is issued in writing.

This advice is based on the planning policies and circumstances that apply at the time of this letter. There is no guarantee that the advice will be relevant if there have been significant changes in either planning policy or the site and its surroundings by the time a formal application is received. Circumstances and policies can change in very short periods of time and it is therefore not possible to give an indication of how long the advice will remain relevant. Furthermore, the accuracy of this advice is dependent on the quality and completeness of your pre-application submission and the questions you asked. Subject to these provisos, this pre-application advice will be taken into account when determining a subsequent application.

Where pre-application advice is not followed, subsequent planning applications are likely to be determined without further negotiations.

Yours sincerely

Jim Bennett
Planning Officer

Confidentiality - We are subject to requirements under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR). If we receive a request to disclose any information in relation to a pre-application discussion prior to the submission of a related planning application, we will make reasonable efforts to notify and consult with you concerning its possible release. However, the final decision on whether the information should be withheld rests with the Council. The Council maintains compliance to the Data Protection Act. We will not release any personal information to third parties.

Please be aware that any pre-application advice given is likely to be made publicly available as part of the online documents once we receive a related application, subject to commercial confidentiality rules.