

1. Background

Application Reference: WP/21/00111/FUL

Proposal: Reconfiguration of station forecourt including alteration to access and parking arrangements, formation of new vehicular exit and public realm works together with formation of pocket park linking King Street and Jubilee Retail Park.

Site Location: Weymouth Railway Station, King Street, Weymouth, Dorset, DT4 7BN

Applicant: Dorset Coast Forum

Case Officer: Mr Huw Williams

Ward: Melcombe Regis

Ward Member: Councillor Jon Orrell

Publicity Expiry Date: 15 August 2021

Decision Due Date: 01 October 2021

Background Papers: The application, the plans and further information about the application may be inspected by entering the application reference at <https://planning.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/>.

Reason for Referral to Committee:

The application is made by the Dorset Coast Forum, part of Dorset Council. It is reported to the Area Planning Committee in accordance with Dorset Council's constitution.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee would be minded to grant planning permission subject to the conditions set out in paragraph 11.1 below and recommends that the Head of Planning determines the application accordingly.

3. Reason for Recommendation

- 3.1 The recommendation is made taking account of:
- (i) the nature and details of the development proposed;
 - (ii) information submitted in support of the application;
 - (iii) the development plan;
 - (iv) national planning policy and guidance;
 - (v) adopted supplementary planning documents and guidance;
 - (vi) consultation responses and other representations made about the application; and
 - (vii) other material planning considerations set out in this report.

- 3.2 Applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.3 The application provides for an appropriate, acceptable and sustainable form of development which, subject to the imposition of recommended planning conditions, taken as a whole would enhance the character, the appearance and the amenities of the locality in accordance with the development plan. Whilst objections have been received to various aspects of the proposal, it is considered that there are no social, environmental, economic or other considerations either warranting or necessitating the determination of the application other than in accordance with the development plan, such that planning permission can and should be granted.

4. Summary of Main Issues

Issue	Conclusion
Principle of Development	The application proposal provides for appropriate and acceptable uses to which there is no in principle land use policy objection.
Impact on character, appearance and natural resources of the area.	Overall beneficial and in general accordance with development plan with no other material considerations warranting or necessitating refusal of planning permission.

5. The Application Site

- 5.1 The planning application site (the Application Site) is shown edged red on the submitted Project Location Plan and comprises two separate parcels of land to the north of King Street, Weymouth.
- 5.2 The larger parcel extends to approximately 0.5 hectares and comprises the forecourt and adjacent car park at Weymouth Railway Station. The smaller parcel extends to approximately 800 sqm of land along the route of the former Weymouth Quay branch line between King Street and the Jubilee Retail Park. Railway tracks remain within this area which has particular significance as a non-designated heritage asset.
- 5.3 A petrol filling station fronting King Street and a DIY retail store (B&Q) are located between the two parcels comprising the Application Site, with Queen Street to the east of the station forecourt and a vehicle repair garage (Kwik-Fit) to the west of the former branch line. The Swannery Car Park is located further west beyond Radipole Park Drive.
- 5.4 The boundary of the designated Weymouth Town Centre Conservation Area runs along the southern side of the adjacent sections of King Street. The entirety of the smaller parcel is located outside the designated area, but the eastern limits of the station forecourt are located within the designated area.
- 5.5 Grade II listed buildings at 12 and 13 Kings Street (Heritage List Entry No. [1142328](#)) and at 14 and 15 King Street (Heritage List Entry No. [1142329](#)) and other locally

listed buildings are located within the conservation area to the south of the Application Site.

- 5.6 Buildings along the southern side of King Street and along Queen Street contain a mix of commercial and residential uses. Land to the north of the station forecourt accommodates a mix of station related uses.

6. The Application and Proposed Development

- 6.1 The application was received as valid on 29 January 2021 but amended in July 2021. The amendment of the application involved the submission of revised plans and drawings detailing amended surfacing and planting proposals.
- 6.2 Planning permission is sought for public realm works that would involve the reconfiguration of station forecourt and adjacent car park and the creation of a 'pocket park' between King Street and the Jubilee Retail Park.
- 6.3 The application is made by the Dorset Coast Forum (the Applicant), an independent strategic coastal partnership established in 1995 and hosted by Dorset Council which looks at long term, broad-scale issues facing the Dorset coast and its inshore waters.
- 6.4 The overriding aim of the Dorset Coast Forum is to promote a sustainable approach to the management, use and development of Dorset's coastal zone to ensure that its inherent natural and cultural qualities are maintained and enhanced for the benefit of future generations.
- 6.5 As initially validated, in addition to the requisite form, certificate, fee and location plan, the application included:
- (i) various plans and drawings illustrating the application proposals;
 - (ii) a Design and Access Statement;
 - (iii) a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal dated 15th October 2020 prepared by Dorset Council's Natural Environment Team;
 - (iv) a Flood Risk Assessment dated May 2021 prepared by WSP; and
 - (v) a Drainage Survey prepared dated 17/12/2020 prepared by Lanes Group plc.
- 6.6 Following representations made about the application regarding tree loss, the application was supplemented through the submission of a tree report prepared by Dorset Council's Arboricultural Manager.
- 6.7 The Design and Access Statement explains that Weymouth Station Gateway is a South Western Railway (SWR) Customer & Communities Improvement Funded (CCIF) partnership project, the main aims of which are to:
- Enable interchange between buses and trains and sustainable transport links by redesigning the space for buses/coaches to drop and pick up.
 - Improve traffic flow throughout the forecourt without impacting on the surrounding traffic flow on King Street/Queen Street.
 - Enable better pedestrian access and cycle routes through the forecourt area.
 - Creating an attractive walkway and cycle link from a narrow area which links two major business areas and runs alongside a section of closed rail line into a Railway Heritage Park.

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- Improved public realm by encouraging new businesses to the area and increase tourism.
- Better wayfinding, interpretation and the provision of information.
- Transform first impressions by making the area more welcoming and safe for local residents and visitors to the town.

- 6.8 Key elements of the proposals for the forecourt and station car park include:
- (i) changes to the road layout including the removal of the existing roundabout and the provision of new pedestrian crossings;
 - (ii) the creation of a landscaped pedestrian area bordering King Street and Queen Street;
 - (iii) the lowering of the car park wall along the King Street frontage and the formation of a new access to King Street from the car park to facilitate vehicular egress; and
 - (iv) the relocation of passenger drop-off bays to the car park area.
- 6.9 The proposals for the pocket park provide for:
- (i) the retention of the existing footway route;
 - (ii) the removal of fencing and walling;
 - (iii) the widening of the path into currently disused railway area;
 - (iv) incorporation of surviving railway features within the park landscape;
 - (v) the planting of new trees and wildflower areas; and
 - (vi) surface water management through infiltration and connection to existing mains infrastructure.

7. Consultation Response

7.1 Dorset Council Ward Member

No response received.

7.2 Weymouth Town Council

Responded on 17th May 2021 advising that application was considered by the Planning & Licensing Committee at its meeting on 11th May 2021 and stating that the Council has no objection. Commented that:

“The Council would urge Dorset Council to seek additional funding and would encourage Dorset Council to continue to work with bus companies in order to make the station gateway an active travel hub. The Council would also support a road safety audit being undertaken.”

Responded to consultation on amended plans on 11th August 2021 objecting to the application:

“... on the grounds of removal of existing trees. The Council requests that consideration is given to retaining existing, healthy trees rather than removing them and replacing with new trees. It is felt that the scheme is underwhelming and the design does not reduce the issue of antisocial behaviour around the station forecourt. In addition, the Committee was concerned that, should

planning permission be granted, this will close the opportunities for grant funding for a transport hub in the future".

7.3 Dorset Council Transport Development Liaison Engineer

Responded on 29th April 2021 advising that the Highway Authority commenting that the proposals do not present a material harm to the transport network or to highway safety and consequently has no objection. Further commented:

"It is noted that there are no facilities or area for the parking of motorcycles and scooters. Young riders being more likely to commute from outlying areas to then travel by train to other centres such as Poole and Bournemouth for reasons of employment or education for journey that might otherwise be to arduous. Or will it be acceptable to park in the spaces provided for cars? Probably not, and inefficient anyway. There does seem to be suitable areas such as on the raised paving like near the existing cycle stands (actually shown as being removed – opportunity?). Also, some form of simple heavy duty locking point would help prevent a common crime of theft and motorcyclists are far more likely to carry a heavy duty chain and lock. Such facilities should be provided in locations having good opportunities for natural surveillance. Scooters and motorcycles can be bumped up the full-batter kerbs used with the car park so this should not prove a problem. A simple motorbike sign on a pole at locations where such parking would be preferred (such as the one at the northwest corner of the Sainsburys store off Mercery Rd) is very helpful when looking for such parking."

7.4 Network Rail

Responded on 10th May 2021 confirming that Network Rail and the train operating company South Western Railway are supportive of the proposals to reconfigure Weymouth Railway Station forecourt.

7.5 Dorset Council Rights of Way

No response received.

7.6 Dorset Council Coastal Risk Management

No response received.

7.7 Dorset Council Conservation and Design Officers

Response dated 3 June 2021 indicating support subject to conditions or amended drawings showing retention of existing crossing gates.

Does not consider that the proposals will result in harm to designated and non-designated assets. With regard to impact on the significance of the remains of the Weymouth Quay Railway commented that:

"This area, which currently serves no useful function, is neglected and strewn with litter. We welcome the proposed transformation of this area into a more attractive thoroughfare and, in particular, the proposed retention of the railway

tracks and sleepers. Though the proposals suggest some alteration of both to replace damaged elements and to adjust to new levels, the retention of the line is fundamental to the heritage asset's significance and the way in which it links to the surviving sections of track between here and the peninsula quay. In general, we therefore feel that the proposed alterations will not result in harm to the asset's significance.

However, our one concern of the proposals is the removal of the existing crossing gates at the N end of the area. These too, though certainly 20th-century items rather than 1865, play a part in understanding and appreciating the history of this section of surviving track and the former line of the railway beyond. As a condition of our support, we would therefore advise that the gates should be retained, for example as follows:

- retain one set of gates at the N end of the track and relocate the other gate to the S end; and
- repair, redecorate and fix them in an open position on the W side of the park boundary, where they would be discretely read as 'gateways' onto the proposed transitional areas of surface-brushed concrete."

Further response dated 26 August 2021 indicating no need to change previous comments in light of application amendment.

8. Publicity and Other Representations

8.1 The application was publicised by site notices displayed on 05 May 2021 and 30 July 2021 and notification letters were sent to 66 addresses. In addition to the consultation responses noted above, Weymouth Civic Society made written representations by letters dated 14th April 2021 and email sent 18 August 2021.

8.2 The letter of 14th April 2021 noted:

"We have serious reservations about the plans for the Station forecourt and car park. The proposals promise at best only very marginal improvements. Of the seven main aims noted in the Design and Access statement, only the 'Pocket Park' can be seen to be satisfactorily realised and this is physically separate from the Station area and relieves none of its problems. We believe significant improvement is unlikely to be achieved with the current traffic layout of King Street.

The key aim of the creation of an effective transport interchange to encourage more use of public transport is virtually ignored. We note the single proposed bus bay for scheduled routes, but we question which buses would use it and also question how this will improve access to the majority of linking bus services for residents or visitors using the station. The main problem of creating an interchange between the station and major bus routes to the rest of the town is not addressed.

There are marginal improvements to access to the station area by private vehicles. The slight increase in 'dropping-off' car spaces to ten is welcome. The extra exit near the garage also appears to make the traffic circulation for private vehicles a little easier, but it still leaves a tight set of spaces directly

abutting the entrance to the car park, which could cause some manoeuvring problems

The new shared walkway and cycle lane along the line of the redundant railway line is an improvement on the ugly patch of waste ground it replaces, but it still lies between two very busy roads. The improvement of conditions for pedestrians and cyclists through the station forecourt is hardly achieved without separate routes and by the retention of multiple points crossing vehicle routes, though it is one of the seven main aims of the scheme,

The landscaping proposals are also very disappointing. The present maturing trees around the perimeter of the forecourt define the space. Their replacements along the road line closer to the station buildings leaves an indeterminate space broken by 'random boulders' and what seem to be haphazard low walls enclosing patches of grass. It is easy to see even greater problems with litter and graffiti developing than exist at present.

Altogether we consider that the proposals result, at best, in only minor improvements, which do not justify the expense and disruption that would result from their implementation."

8.3 Weymouth Civic Society's further submission of 18 August 2021 re-affirmed the views expressed previously and further noted:

"We also support Weymouth Town Council's views, especially on the matters noted below, and wish to strengthen our concerns about the proposals, as follows:

General Concept.

We do not consider that the present proposals would result in a serious improvement on the existing situation, nor do they make the alterations necessary to make the station forecourt a viable transport hub. Our original objections are strengthened by the fear that the present scheme could preclude potential funding for a more worthwhile scheme in the future.

Trees and Landscaping.

We are strongly of the view that the existing trees should be retained, and we reiterate our opposition to removing them. They are of value both aesthetically and environmentally, and cutting them down would in our view be contrary to principles of sustainability. Furthermore, to do so would be dismissing the efforts of volunteers who have maintained and enhanced the trees and flower beds for many years, and to remove them all would be a great discouragement of any more such beneficial activity."

9. Policy Framework

9.1 Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) provides that in dealing with an application for planning permission the authority shall have regard to:

- (a) the provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application,

- (b) a post-examination draft neighbourhood development plan, so far as material to the application,
- (c) any local finance considerations, so far as material to the application, and
- (d) any other material considerations.

9.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) provides that if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Development Plan

9.3 The development plan includes the adopted [West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan 2015](#) (the Adopted Local Plan) which sets out a vision for the plan area for the period to 2031 as well as strategic detailed development management policies for realising that vision.

9.4 The Proposals Map of the Adopted Local Plan shows the railway station forecourt and adjacent car park to be located:

- (i) wholly within the development boundary of Weymouth;
- (ii) wholly within the Weymouth Town Centre Strategy Area; and
- (iii) wholly within the Station Area and Swannery Car Park Area.

9.5 The pocket park area is shown as being:

- (i) wholly within the development boundary for Weymouth;
- (ii) wholly within the Weymouth Town Centre Strategy Area; and
- (iii) immediately adjacent to the Station Area and Swannery Car Park Area.

9.6 Having regard to the location of the Application Site and the nature of the proposed development, the most relevant policies of the Adopted Local Plan are:

- INT1. Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- ENV1. Landscape, Seascape and Sites of Geological Interest
- ENV2. Wildlife and Habitats
- ENV4. Heritage Assets
- ENV5. Flood Risk
- ENV10. The Landscape and Townscape Setting
- COM7. Creating A Safe and Efficient Transport Network
- COM8. Transport Interchanges and Community Travel Exchanges
- WEY1. Weymouth Town Centre Strategy
- WEY3. Station Area and Swannery Car Park

Post-examination Draft Neighbourhood Development Plan

9.7 There is currently no post-examination draft neighbourhood development plan covering the Application Site.

Local Finance Considerations

9.8 For the purposes of section 70(2) “local finance consideration” means:

- (a) a grant or other financial assistance that has been, or will or could be, provided to a relevant authority by a Minister of the Crown, or

- (b) sums that a relevant authority has received, or will or could receive, in payment of Community Infrastructure Levy.

9.9 To be material to the determination of an application for planning permission, a local finance consideration must have the potential to help make development acceptable in planning terms. The application does not identify any grant or other financial assistance constituting a local finance consideration. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) operates in the former Weymouth and Portland Borough Council area but the proposed development is of a type that is nil rated and hence would not make any CIL payment. Accordingly, it is considered that there are no local finance considerations that are material to the determination of the subject application.

Other Material Considerations

9.10 The term “any other material considerations” is broad in scope, a material consideration being any matter which is relevant to making the planning decision in question.

9.11 Amongst other matters, local planning authorities must take account of duly made representations made about applications for planning permission. In relation to planning policy, the term encompasses national planning policy and guidance; supplementary planning documents and guidance; emerging planning policy and other policy pronouncements such as ministerial statements.

National Planning Policy and National Planning Practice Guidance

9.12 The National Planning Policy Framework (‘the NPPF’) sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and is material to the determination of all applications for planning permission in England.

9.13 The NPPF sets out policy on a range of relevant matters including:

- Achieving Sustainable development – paragraphs 7-14
- Decision making – paragraphs 38-58;
- Ensuring the vitality of town centres – paragraphs 85-90;
- Promoting healthy and safe communities – paragraphs 91-101;
- Promoting sustainable transport – paragraphs 102-111;
- Achieving well-designed places – paragraphs 124-132;
- Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change – paragraphs 148-169;
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment – paragraphs 170-183; and
- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment – paragraphs 184-202.

Supplementary Planning Policy and Guidance

9.14 Weymouth & Portland Borough Council adopted the [Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan Vision Document](#) in May 2015 and the [Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document](#) in October 20215.

9.15 The Town Centre Masterplan was prepared alongside the Adopted Local Plan and provides guidance for the consideration of planning applications in the town centre

and a steer to prospective developers about the sort of proposals that will be encouraged. The main focus of the of the Masterplan is achieving improvements to the public realm and traffic flows together with the redevelopment of five key sites, including the Station Gateway.

- 9.16 The [Weymouth Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal](#) of December 2012 provides a formal assessment and definition of the special architectural and historic interest of the Town Centre Conservation Area and supports the heritage and design policies set out in the Adopted Local Plan.

Emerging Planning Policy

- 9.17 The Dorset Council Local Plan Options Consultation took place between January and March 2021.
- 9.18 Paragraph 35 of the NPPF provides that, to be sound, development plans must be prepared positively, must be justified, must be effective and must be consistent with national policy. Paragraph 48 of the NPPF provides that local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:
- a) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given)
 - b) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
 - c) the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).
- 9.19 Being at a very early stage of preparation, the Consultation Draft Local Plan should be accorded very limited weight in decision making.

10. Appraisal

- 10.1 The main issues in the determination of the application relate to:
- (i) the acceptability in principle of the proposed development; and
 - (ii) the acceptability of the detailed design proposals having particular regard to impact on the character, the appearance and the amenities of the area.
- 10.2 The NPPF provides that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development (paragraph 7) and that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives – economic, social and environmental – which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways, so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives (paragraph 8).
- 10.3 So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Amongst other matters, For decision-taking, amongst other matters, this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.

- 10.4 Although pre-dating the current version of the NPPF, Policy INT1 of the Adopted Local Plan provides that there will be a presumption in favour of sustainable development that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area
- 10.5 Paragraph 38 of the NPPF provides that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way, using the full range of planning tools available and working proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area, and further provides that decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 10.6 The proposed pocket park and the railway station forecourt and adjacent car park are each located within the Weymouth Town Centre Strategy Area wherein policy WEY1 of the Adopted Local Plan provides that development must, as far as practicable, meet the following aims:
- To retain and enhance the area's rich and distinct local character and notable landmarks, and the harmony in the scale, massing and materials used that help create a cohesive character, particularly when viewed from the sea and coastline taking account of views across Weymouth Bay;
 - To have an attractive public realm benefitting from the waterfront location;
 - To support a thriving town centre with a range of national and independent traders, a rich and varied cultural offer throughout the year and an active night-time economy, and reduce the co-location of uses likely to cause anti-social behaviour;
 - To fill the gap in activity between 5pm –9pm, primarily by introducing more family friendly activities in appropriate locations;
 - To improve the first impressions of the area, primarily by making the main arrival points (the Swannery Car Park, Lodmoor Car Park, railway station, and ferry terminal), and the links from these to the main shopping and leisure areas, into a more pedestrian friendly, safe and attractive environment, with positive and active frontage development;
 - To recognise the need to manage residual flood risk, primarily through the avoidance of more vulnerable uses on the ground floors or raising floor levels, securing good access arrangements, using flood resilient and resistant construction methods and make contributions towards strategic flood risk management as appropriate. Planning permission will not be granted for development which would compromise the long term aims of this strategy.
- 10.7 The forecourt and adjacent car park are additionally located within the Station Area key site wherein development is to be guided by the Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan and in respect of which policy WEY3 of the Adopted Local Plan provides that:
- “The station area will be developed as a transport hub, including a mix of retail, commercial businesses and residential to help improve the first impressions of the area through the introduction of positive and active frontage development and creation of a high quality public realm.
- 10.8 Paragraph 7.3.10 of the Adopted Local Plan explains that:

“The area around the station is in need of enhancement, and the presence of the bus depot / garage also detracts from the first impressions of the area. Redevelopment of the station area, which could be achieved through redevelopment with the depot and car-parking areas relocated (for example, onto land to the rear of the station), will provide an opportunity to improve the connectivity of different modes of transport, and introduce a more positive frontage and improve the legibility of the main pedestrian routes into the town centre.”

10.9 Within the Weymouth Town Centre Masterplan, the station forecourt area is identified as part of the Station Gateway key site for which key objectives are identified at paragraph 5.5.2 of the Town Centre Masterplan SPD as including:

- To improve the bus and rail interchange to enhance travel choice and facilitate easy and convenient interchange.
- To enhance connections particularly by foot and cyclists to key destinations within Weymouth including the town centre, the Esplanade, Radipole Lake Nature Reserve and beach area and the inner harbour to strengthen links to the rest of the town. Better access across Westham Junction will be required.
- To improve signage to improve navigability around the area and make the place more welcoming to arrivals to the town.
- To provide opportunities for mixed use development, including small scale retail units.

10.10 Paragraph 5.5.8 of the Masterplan SPD notes that:

“The existing station forecourt has a poor pedestrian environment and poor linkages to the places that people arriving in Weymouth want to visit. The whole area surrounding the station is dominated by traffic and roads which sever linkages for pedestrians. This is coupled with poor signage which aggravates the issue. There are opportunities to improve the arrival experience for visitors to the town and to provide more attractive and inviting pedestrian routes to the Esplanade along King Street and to Commercial Road and the town centre.”

10.11 It is further noted that the station forecourt provides an important drop off point for taxis and cars and this function needs to be retained (paragraph 5.5.10).

10.12 Requirements for the area are identified at paragraph 5.5.11 of the Masterplan to include:

- Provision of a transport hub providing interchange between train, bus, walking and cycling travel. This should include a new station building.
- High quality materials and planting.
- Car parking.
- Provision needs to be made for taxis, drop off points for rail connections, cycle parking, pedestrian crossings and waiting areas.

10.13 It is further stated that the frontage to King Street and Commercial Road will accommodate new buildings to house a new transport hub including a new rail

station and other mixed use commercial development, including offices and small retail units.

- 10.14 Policy COM8 of the Adopted Local Plan provides that proposals which involve the improvement of the public realm around public transport interchanges will be encouraged and supported as long as there is no detriment to the function of the interchange.
- 10.15 Although not providing for the construction of either new frontage buildings or a new railway station, the application proposals are very much focussed on the delivery and realisation of environmental, social and economic enhancements that are closely aligned to the aims of the adopted policies.
- 10.16 In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, local planning authorities must have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. With respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. Paragraph 206 of the NPPF provides that local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance and that proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.
- 10.17 The Weymouth Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal identifies that the station forecourt “affects the character and appearance of the area” but “its limited or immature planting emphasises its bleaker characteristics” (page 75) with the forecourt also identified as a “neutral area” which needs enhancement (page 32). Dorset Council’s Senior Conservation Officer does not consider that the proposals will result in harm to either the designated or the non-designated heritage assets in the vicinity of the Application Site and subject to the imposition of a condition requiring the retention and re-use of the existing railway gates has raised no objection to the design proposals. I concur with this assessment and am satisfied that the overall impact on the historic environment would be beneficial.
- 10.18 The Application Site is of limited ecological value, with retained, replacement and additional landscaping likely to result in net gain for biodiversity. Removal of the railway lines from the pocket park area would result in the further loss of physical survivals of the former branch line, but the pocket park proposals would preserve the legibility of the route and the design proposals provide for the incorporation of surviving features within the park landscape. The Applicant has also indicated that it is intended to retain the existing two crossing gates currently situated at the northern end of the pocket park area within the park. In my opinion, any harm arising from the further loss of physical survivals of the Branch Line would be clearly outweighed by the public benefits associated with greater accessibility and the creation of a more attractive connection between King Street and the Jubilee Retail Park. Elsewhere and more generally, the greater variation in surface finishes, additional soft landscaping and improved public access arrangements would also enhance the setting on the Weymouth Conservation Area and other nearby designated heritage assets in line with policy objectives.

10.19 Wider and/or more substantial enhancements to the local environment in accordance with development plan policy would of course be welcome, but the application proposals must be considered on their merits. No alternative proposals are currently before the planning authority for consideration and those presented within the subject application would not cause harm to any designated heritage or natural assets and would be to the benefit of the functioning of the interchange. The proposals are consistent with key policy objectives for the locality and would not prevent wider improvements in accordance with adopted policy.

10.20 Parts of the Application Site are at elevated risk of flooding, but as the proposal involves the continuation of existing usage and the introduction of additional permeable landscaping and minor improvements to existing drainage systems, the development would not increase flood risk. Officers are therefore satisfied that there is no in principle land use objection to the application proposals.

10.21 Particular concerns have been expressed in representations made about the application relating to tree loss and anti-social behaviours.

10.22 In response to Weymouth Town Council's objection, the Applicant has provided the following as reasons for the proposed tree removal:

- "A new and more open design that allows for better pedestrian flow.
- Some of the trees currently obstruct the CCTV in the area. The trees to be removed will enable increased CCTV coverage to monitor any anti-social behaviour problem which is currently an issue at the site.
- The current condition tree survey which was conducted by the Arboriculture Manager at Dorset Council showed three trees were identified as dying and several are salt damaged.
- Proposed new trees will also be easier to maintain (including no blocking CCTV as they grow) and will be more suitable for the location.
- The current trees directly in front of the station hide the station building, obstruct light and access."

10.23 The Applicant has also commented:

"Within the existing design 7 healthy trees will be retained out of 17 existing and there will be an additional 20 new trees planted. This gives a NET gain of 10 trees within the station forecourt. There are also 9 new trees designated for nearby Pocket Park which is also part of this project giving an overall gain of 19 additional trees in the immediate environment.

In addition, the planting of additional trees and other greenery is designed to be aesthetically pleasing, offer shade, reduce carbon and increase the permeable areas within the scheme to mitigate the risk of flooding."

10.24 The referenced tree report is accompanied by a Tree Works Schedule noting the condition of the surveyed trees and recommendations for arboricultural management. The submitted report notes:

"We have included all the trees even though I know that some are going to be removed.

Trees 17, 15 and 5 are dying and will probably have to be removed in the next 12 months. All the others are pretty much the same. Several are suffering from salt damage, which, should correct itself for next year, unless we get further storms next Spring, in which case they will get caught again.

None of the trees to be removed are going to be a major loss as none are great specimens or of great value. Certainly, any replacement planting will reduce the impact of the loss of these trees.

We have had a look at the old, filled in tree pits. The one outside the sub-station is a none starter as the gates to the sub-station open outwards to where the tree would be and there is no room to move the planting pit. With regards the other two filled in pits, whilst possible, I would be concerned about the closeness to the car parking bays and the constant need to prune the trees. We already have big problems with such Dorset Council car parks.”

10.25 In response to Weymouth Town Council’s comments on anti-social behaviour, the Applicant has commented:

“The Dorset Coast Forum (lead of the project) has consulted extensively with the Project Steering Group, South Western Railway, Community Safety Team, the British Transport Police and Dorset Police to look at design improvements to help deter anti-social behaviour as well as have a greater presence at the station as this was something that the public and key stakeholders wanted to be addressed. The final design was approved by all those consulted. The design addresses anti-social behaviour by having:

- An enhanced pedestrian area which is a more welcoming and open environment that will reduce concealment making it less likely for anti-social behaviour.
- A busier integrated transport hub that should attract more people to use the space for the right reasons and less likely for undesirable behaviour to congregate.
- A cleaner attractive and more contemporary design should make people feel safer and more likely to use the area, thus reducing people displaying anti-social behaviour as the dominant users.
- The car park wall reduced in height to expose any hidden areas, reduce concealment and create greater visibility.
- Better lighting to address safety concerns around night-time usage.
- Removal of some of the trees that currently obstruct the CCTV in the area. The trees to be removed will enable increased CCTV coverage to monitor any anti-social behaviour problem which is currently an issue at the site. The scheme will also be inputting enhanced CCTV for the area.
- The project team are looking at deterrent measures such as watering hanging baskets to deter congregation around hotspots at the front of the station steps.
- Ongoing discussions with the British Transport Police and SWR to have a greater presence within the station.

While the project is aiming to address Anti-social behaviour through design and the above points, tackling anti-social behaviour requires a multi-agency approach which cannot be done through design alone and is outside the scope of most infrastructure projects. However, we have consulted with all relevant agencies on how best to tackle the issue while acknowledging it is a multi-faceted. We are also having conversations with the British Transport Police about how the project can support increased presence at the station. We hope that this first stage of providing infrastructure to work with will encourage others to continue to work together to tackle the issue.”

10.26 Amongst other matters, in relation to promoting healthy and safe communities, paragraph 92 of the NPPF provides that planning decisions should aim to achieve, healthy, inclusive and safe places which are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion – for example through the use of attractive, well-designed, clear and legible pedestrian and cycle routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas.

10.27 In response to Weymouth Town Council’s comments on the loss of potential grant funding for a transport hub in the future, the Applicant has commented:

“This project is a significant improvement to the existing station and has been designed on the responses from the public consultation within the resources available at this time. We do not accept that this scheme will close the opportunities for grant funding for a transport hub in the future.

New bus stops within forecourt and on King Street will bring up to four services there in the summer months, ones which are most likely to be used as a connection from rail services. Bringing more buses to the station would need a radical change to the layout of the junction of King Street and Esplanade including allowing right turns for buses towards Kings Statue.

At present there is insufficient space to turn and park more buses at the station without additional land being available, even if all car parking spaces were transferred to the current overflow car park. This is very much seen as a Phase 1 of improvements at the station which could include more buses in the future if achievable through a masterplan approach.

We hope that the improvements to the Weymouth forecourt will be a catalyst for South Western Railway, Network Rail (NR) and local partners to develop the station building and beyond and we are having encouraging discussions about that ambition with our project partners. There is a collective will to work with Network Rail and local partners to develop the wider area within Network Rail’s extensive property portfolio. It is also hoped that the improvements will encourage economic activity in this area and become a more welcoming asset to the town, stimulating future investment from NR into the development of their land surrounding the site.

10.28 Taking account of the Applicant’s response to the representations made about the proposed development and to the details of the design proposals, I am satisfied that the proposals would result in a more pedestrian friendly, better connected, safer,

more attractive, more welcoming and more accessible gateway to the town centre in general accordance with the development plan and that there are no material considerations warranting determination of the application other than in accordance with the development plan. I am therefore satisfied that planning permission can and should be granted.

11. Details for Inclusion in Decision Notice

11.1 Recommended Planning Conditions

(1) Time Limit – Commencement of Development

The development hereby permitted shall be begun not later than the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

(2) Development in Accordance Approved Plans and Drawings

Unless otherwise required by the conditions of this permission, the development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following plans and drawings submitted as part of the application:

- (i) P01 dated 29/01/2021 and titled DRAINAGE LAYOUT POCKET PARK;
- (ii) WSP DRAWING No: 70076910-WSP-GEN-SWI-DR-CH-00001 Rev C03 dated 22/07/2021 and titled SURFACE CONTOUR LAYOUT FORECOURT, CAR PARK AND KING STREET;
- (iii) WSP DRAWING No: 70076910-WSP-HDG-SWI-DE-CD-00031 Rev C03 dated 22/07/2021 and titled DRAINAGE DETAILS SHEET 1 OF 2;
- (iv) WSP DRAWING No: 70076910-WSP-HDG-SWI-DE-CD-00032 Rev C03 dated 22/07/2021 and titled DRAINAGE DETAILS SHEET 2 OF 2;
- (v) WSP DRAWING No: 70076910-WSP-HDG-SWI-DR-CD-00 Rev P01 dated 29/01/2021 and titled CATCHMENT LAYOUT POCKET PARK;
- (vi) WSP DRAWING No: 70076910-WSP-HDG-SWI-DR-CD-00001 Rev C03 dated 22/07/2021 and titled SURFACE WATER LAYOUT PLAN FORECOURT, CAR PARK AND KING STREET;
- (vii) WSP DRAWING No: 70076910-WSP-HDG-SWI-DR-CD-00021 Rev C03 dated 22/07/2021 and titled DRAINAGE SCHEDULES FORECOURT, CAR PARK AND KING STREET;
- (viii) WSP DRAWING No: 70076910-WSP-HDG-SWI-DR-CD-00041 Rev C03 dated 22/07/2021 and titled EXISTING CATCHMENT PLAN FORECOURT, CAR PARK AND KING STREET;
- (ix) WSP DRAWING No: 70076910-WSP-HDG-SWI-DR-CD-00051 Rev C03 dated 22/07/2021 and titled PROPOSED CATCHMENT PLAN FORECOURT, CAR PARK AND KING STREET;
- (x) WSP DRAWING No: 70076910-WSP-HGN-SWI-DE-CH-00011 Rev C03 dated 22/07/2021 and titled HIGHWAYS DETAILS SHEET 1 OF 2;
- (xi) WSP DRAWING No: 70076910-WSP-HGN-SWI-DE-CH-00012 Rev C03 dated 22/07/2021 and titled HIGHWAYS DETAILS SHEET 2 OF 2;
- (xii) WSP DRAWING No: 70076910-WSP-HGN-SWI-DR-CH-00 Rev P02 dated 29/01/2021 and titled GENERAL ARRANGEMENT POCKET PARK;

- (xiii) WSP DRAWING No: 70076910-WSP-HGN-SWI-DR-CH-00001 Rev C04 dated 22/07/2021 and titled GENERAL ARRANGEMENT FORECOURT, CAR PARK AND KING STREET;
- (xiv) WSP DRAWING No: 70076910-WSP-HGN-SWI-DR-CH-00021 Rev C03 dated 22/07/2021 and titled SECTION FORECOURT, CAR PARK AND KING STREET;
- (xv) WSP DRAWING No: 70076910-WSP-HKF-SWI-DR-CH-00 Rev P01 dated 29/01/2021 and titled KERBS, FOOTWAYS & PAVED AREAS POCKET PARK;
- (xvi) WSP DRAWING No: 70076910-WSP-HKF-SWI-DR-CH-00001 Rev C03 dated 22/07/2021 and titled KERBS, FOOTWAYS & PAVED AREAS FORECOURT, CAR PARK AND KING STREET;
- (xvii) WSP DRAWING No: 70076910-WSP-HMK-SWI-DR-CH-00 Rev P01 dated 29/01/2021 and titled SIGNS AND ROAD MARKINGS POCKET PARK;
- (xviii) WSP DRAWING No: WSP DRAWING No: 70076910-WSP-HMK-SWI-DR-CH-00001 Rev C03 dated 22/07/2021 and titled ROAD MARKINGS FORECOURT, CAR PARK AND KING STREET;
- (xix) WSP DRAWING No: 70076910-WSP-HSC-SWI-DR-CH-00 Rev P01 dated 29/01/2021 and titled SITE CLEARANCE POCKET PARK;
- (xx) WSP DRAWING No: 70076910-WSP-HSC-SWI-DR-CH-00001 Rev C03 dated 22/07/2021 and titled SITE CLEARANCE FORECOURT, CAR PARK AND KING STREET; and
- (xxi) WSP DRAWING No: 70076910-WSP-HSN-SWI-DR-CH-00001 Rev C03 dated 22/07/2021 and titled SIGNS FORECOURT, CAR PARK AND KING STREET.

Reason: To regulate the proposed development having regard to policies ENV1, ENV2, ENV4, ENV5, ENV10, COM7, COM8, WEY1 and WEY3 of the adopted Weymouth and Portland Local Plan 2015

(3) Retention and Re-use of Existing Railway Gates

The existing railway gates located at northern end of the pocket park area shown to be removed on approved DRAWING No: 70076910-WSP-HSC-SWI-DR-CH-00 Rev P01 shall be retained on site and shall be installed as entrance features at the northern and southern ends of the pocket park.

Reason: To secure the preservation and re-use of surviving features of the Weymouth Quay branch line in the interests of the historic environment having regard to policies ENV4 and ENV10 of the adopted Weymouth and Portland Local Plan 2015.

(4) Implementation of Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

All biodiversity mitigation and enhancement measures detailed in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal dated 15th October 2020 submitted in support of the application shall be implemented and thereafter maintained in accordance with the arrangements detailed in that appraisal.

Reason: To adequately mitigate biodiversity impact and to secure net gain for biodiversity having regard to policy ENV2 (Wildlife and Habitats) of the adopted Weymouth and Portland Local Plan 2015.

11.2 Informative Notes to be Included on Decision Notice

(1) Statement of Positive Involvement

In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, as the local planning authority, Dorset Council takes a positive and proactive approach to development proposals focused on solutions. Dorset Council worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner by:

- (i) providing a pre-application advice service;
- (ii) updating the applicant of issues as they arose in the processing of the application;
- (iii) providing the applicant with the opportunity to address issues of concern with a view to facilitating a recommendation to grant permission; and
- (iv) allowing amendments to be made to the application proposal.

(2) Further Information

Further information relating to this decision may be viewed online through the application webpages accessible by entering the application details at <https://planning.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/>.

Report Prepared By: Huw Williams MRTPI - Lead Project Officer
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