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Via email: NeighbourhoodPlanning@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

09 April 2025

Dear Planning,

WEYMOUTH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2021 – 2038 – Pre-Examination Consultation (January 2025)

These representations are submitted to Dorset Council ('the Council') by Network Rail Infrastructure Limited ('Network Rail'), in respect of the consultation on the pre-examination version of the submitted Weymouth Neighbourhood Plan ('the Plan').

Background

Network Rail (NR) owns, operates, maintains and develops the railways in England, Scotland and Wales. NR is a public sector company, sponsored by the Department for Transport. NR is responsible for providing a safe, reliable and efficient railway while growing and upgrading the network to better serve passengers and freight.

NR are committed to working collaboratively with the Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to develop a Plan that is effective and ultimately delivers for residents of Weymouth.

Policy W16: Major Housing Sites

NR believes that this Policy should promote effective walking and cycling links (including e-bike / shared bikes/scooter hire) to Upwey and Weymouth rail stations. Reference to this should be made within part 2 of the Policy or as a standalone part.

Policy W24: Jubilee Sidings

NR supports the inclusion of the site as an allocation within the Plan however this site should be considered as part of the overall NR land in the area encompassing Halfords / B&Q and associated car parks as well as the station building. It is noted that para 9.110 refers to the wider land and the

increase in viability resulting from this. To facilitate this, a masterplan should be developed for the station area. There should be recognition of the opportunity and need to improve the station building as part of any redevelopment of the wider area, potentially creating a station quarter with a higher quality design than currently with the existing buildings. There are opportunities to consider how a new / improved station building could be included in any development, e.g. increasing the height and density. As noted, this would need to be considered as part of a masterplan for the site taking into account blending in with the surrounding residential and commercial areas. There is potential to expand the station's role as a bus / rail interchange and transport hub as part of any development, moving some of the emphasis away from Kings Statue. This should be considered as part of Dorset's LTP4 and the Local Plan too.

The Jubilee Sidings site is available and would provide the opportunity for high density mixed use (including residential) development adjacent to a transport hub at Weymouth rail station however the wider development would contribute even further.

NR suggests a change to the wording in para 2i, with the removal of particularly and replaced with including. The sentence should there read '*residential, including social housing*'.

Policy W25: Land at Mount Pleasant Old Tip – Transport Interchange

NR supports the retention of the use of the site as a Park and Ride facility and for attempts to be made to revitalise the use and service. This facility should not conflict with the additional proposals including electric buses and EV charging points as well e-bikes and last mile logistics. This may necessitate the relocation of the running track in order for the site to achieve its full potential. Fundamentally, encouraging out of town parking and sustainable modes of travel to the Town centre and the railway should be promoted. It is also unclear as to what effect the mobility hub would give when this could be operated more effectively from the Rail station. Again, reference to Weymouth rail centre and a commitment to updating the masterplan to consider all these needs is necessary.

Policy W39: Weymouth Town Centre

NR notes the reference to the Town Centre masterplan within the draft Policy. As mentioned, this masterplan should include the rail station and the opportunities around this to regenerate the Town Centre. This would align with the Government's push for development at or adjacent to transport hubs such as railway stations. NR believes that there needs to be a commitment to reviewing and updating the masterplan in line with the above which appears to be largely missing from the Plan overall. NR welcomes the opportunity to work with the Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Group to undertake the updating of the masterplan, to include the station area. It is recognised that the need to update is noted with paras 10.41 and 10.42 of the supporting text and that the onus on this falls largely with the new Local Plan to be undertaken by Dorset Council. However, a Policy commitment in the Neighbourhood Plan would strengthen this to support and reinforce local views as noted in the supporting text.

Policy W46: Transport and Travel

NR consider that the Policy in its current form fails to give due consideration to public transport improvements and provide a sound basis to encourage these to take place. By considering highway improvements only, this severely restricts the effectiveness of the Plan in encouraging a modal shift to sustainable modes of travel. NR also encourages development proposals to improve links to Weymouth and Upwey rail stations. These also provide a sound basis around which new development could and should be focussed. NR encourages the Plan to be updated to include reference to the matters raised above.

Policy W47: Public Transport

NR remains concerned about the lack of reference to the railway within the current version of the Plan. This was also missing from the Regulation 14 version of the Plan and NR contends this remains an issue that should be addressed. Whilst Policy W47 references public transport, the Policy only mentions buses specifically. The railway provides a key means of reducing private vehicle use and therefore local congestion by facilitating travel by rail.

Weymouth station has direct services to Southampton central in addition to connections to services into London via Woking. South Western and Great Western Railways operate services from the station. The station also has step free access allowing it to be accessible for all. NR believes that the Policy must refer to the railway and the benefits of sustainable transport that this brings. The absence of this reference means that the Plan fails to reflect the full suite of public transport options available for use and precludes opportunities to secure improvements to the railway for the benefit of local residents and other travellers.

Policy W50: Cycle Routes

Reference should be made to the opportunity to cone walking and cycling routes better with Weymouth and Upwey rail stations. NR believes a short addition to the current wording would be sufficient and for it to say 'Development proposals to improve and extend existing cycle routes, to effect better segregation from vehicular traffic, and to link them to the wider network of walking and cycling routes including to the rail stations (NR emphasis) will be supported.

Policy W51: Traffic Impacts

NR is uncertain as to the intention of this Policy as it appears to be worded in a way which fails to give effect to the points raised within the Policy.

The lack of reference to the railway mean sit is difficult to understand how much the Plan proposes to encourage a shift from the private car to sustainable modes of transport. At times, the Plan appears to wish for this however the theme around public transport and support for improvements appears to be lacking through the Plan.

However, Network Rail is keen to continue to work with the Council and the Neighbourhood Plan Group and welcomes further discussion on the above topics and changes to the Pan to reflect these.

I trust the above is clear however please do not hesitate to contact me or arrange a meeting to discuss matters further

Kind regards,

Craig Hatton MRTPI
Senior Town Planner