



Strategic Station Plan: Dorchester Stations



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1 Version control

Date	Version Number	Updates summary	Updated by
08/02/2024	V0.1	First Draft	JP
12/07/2024	V0.2	Updates following AfA announcement & initial comments	JP
31/07/24	V0.3	Further updates from stakeholder comments. Exec summary added	JP

2 Executive Summary



Figure 1 Dorchester West Station Platform 2

As the county town of Dorset, Dorchester plays a key role in the administrative and economic activity of thousands of local residents. The town is also host to a number of tourist attractions and serves as a key transport interchange for passengers between the Heart of Wessex Line (Weymouth – Gloucester) and South West Main Line (Weymouth – London Waterloo).

As instrumental regional and local corridors, both of these lines were in focus of Network Rail’s Dorset Connectivity Strategic Study which suggested a number of service enhancements;

- Additional services to enable 1tph on the Heart of Wessex Line
- Regulation of services on South West Main Line to achieve clockface 2tph

A further recommendation of the study was that Strategic Station Plans should be completed for stations affected by strategic recommendations. Given the strategic importance of Dorchester stations on both lines, the stations were highlighted as requiring such a plan, exploring what changes may be necessary in order to ensure the stations can effectively deal with any strategic aspirations.

Through desktop study and stakeholder engagement, this study has produced a series of recommendations for interventions at both Dorchester stations, as well as in the wider public realm. These recommendations are not costed or funded, nor are they owned by Network Rail. Instead, this document’s purpose is to bring the appropriate organisations into the development of station and wider public-realm improvements in order to ensure a better experience for passengers.

The study focusses on five key themes; interchange & integration; Property; Sustainability; Station Facilities; and Accessibility. A lot of work has recently been undertaken, or is ongoing thanks to the efforts of local authority, operators, and user groups. While a number of recommendations for further improvements are listed throughout this document, three recommendations are prioritised based on their potential impact on passengers using and interchanging between the two stations. It is hoped that the relevant organisation will own these actions in providing passenger improvements.

Recommendation	Benefit	Next Steps
Step Free Platform Access	Allow passengers with reduced mobility to access all station facilities and facilities within immediate surrounds of station without the need for lengthy diversions.	Support next steps of Dorchester South’s CP7 AfA development. Explore viability of producing step-free cross platform access at Dorchester West and ensure that passengers continue to be able to access the station at existing entrances.
Car Parking Strategy	Improve access to railway for passengers who rely on private cars for First Mile. Potential revenue benefits. Potential to provide allocated parking for Dorchester West where currently none exists.	Explore funding options for development of car park options. Work with local authority and operators to explore appetite for advertising accessible parking bays on existing car parks for railway use.
Enhanced Wayfinding	Improve passenger experience when navigating within and between stations through signposting at accessible levels without obstruction. Encourage use of pedestrian and bus routes for shorter journeys.	Work with local authority, rail user groups and operators to review wayfinding provision to ensure that it meets requirements. Where possible, work with existing schemes and projects to influence wayfinding design and provision.

Table 1 Priority Recommendations Summary Table



3 Background

3.1 Strategic Station Plans

Strategic Station Plan (SSP) is a new strategic document established to study a station identified as recommended for significant change through separate strategy or policy within either Network Rail or a third party. The concept and its focus have emerged from the [Dorset Connectivity study](#) which recommended documents be produced, focussing on key stations, particularly looking at the following areas:

- Integration of public and active transport modes
- Station accessibility
- Environmental issues and opportunities
- Community involvement and usage of the station
- Mobility hub options
- Station development opportunities
- Station facility improvements
- Connectivity to tourist and leisure destinations
- Third party funding opportunities
- Railway operations, renewals, and enhancement synergies

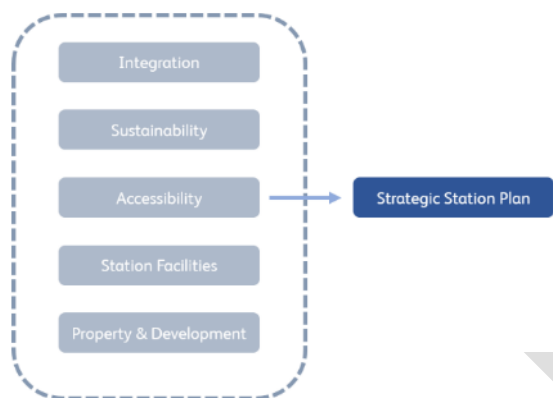


Figure 2 Strategic Station Plan Themes

Strategic Station Plans seek to provide an opportunity for Network Rail to work alongside local partners and stakeholders to encourage conversations, collaboration, and development of strategic station and station area improvements. By focusing on upgrading facilities and optimising layouts within a strategic context, stations can successfully adapt and become more than just transportation “hubs”, they might evolve into

vibrant urban centres with a range of amenities and services. This transformation can attract business, generate employment opportunities, and increases property value, driving economic growth in the surrounding area. The recommendations are therefore not exclusively for rail industry colleagues to take on board and many may be better adopted by third parties or local authorities with rail industry endorsement.

The plans provide a number of recommendations for strategic and tactical improvements. These are not costed, nor do they have timescales applied at this stage and it is recommended that, should any proposed recommendations be taken forward, sufficient development work is undertaken in order to fully understand operability, cost, and deliverability of any intervention highlighted.

3.2 Methodology

Unlike previous Strategic Station Plans, Dorchester Stations SSP is designed to run as a ‘desktop’ style study rather than delivering outputs through targeted workshops. Despite this, stakeholder engagement and feedback will remain vital to ensuring all recommendations are robust and aligned. To this end, a steering group has been established consisting of representatives from Network Rail, Train Operators, the Local Authority and the local Sub National Transport Body. Further elements of engagement will take place on an ad hoc basis in order to inform the study. For example, representatives of both the South Wessex and Purbeck CRPs have each kindly provided their input to this document.



Figure 3 Strategic Station Plan Process

Given the nature of the recommendations contained within this Strategic Station Plan, it is the intention of Network Rail’s Strategic Planning team, that these documents remain live with reviews carried out as and when material change happens on the ground. Ongoing engagement with stakeholders is, and will continue to be, crucial for this purpose.

3.3 Dorchester

110 miles Southwest of London, 50 miles south of Bristol, and 50 miles East of Exeter, Dorchester is the County Town of Dorset. Framed by the river Frome to the North, A37 to the West and A35 to the South and East, Dorchester had population of 20,800 at the 2021 census. As well as its importance as County Town, Dorchester is host to the County Hospital, located just to the West of Dorchester West station, as well as a number of museums and other cultural attractions including the Dorchester Market, attracting thousands of tourists and shoppers every year.

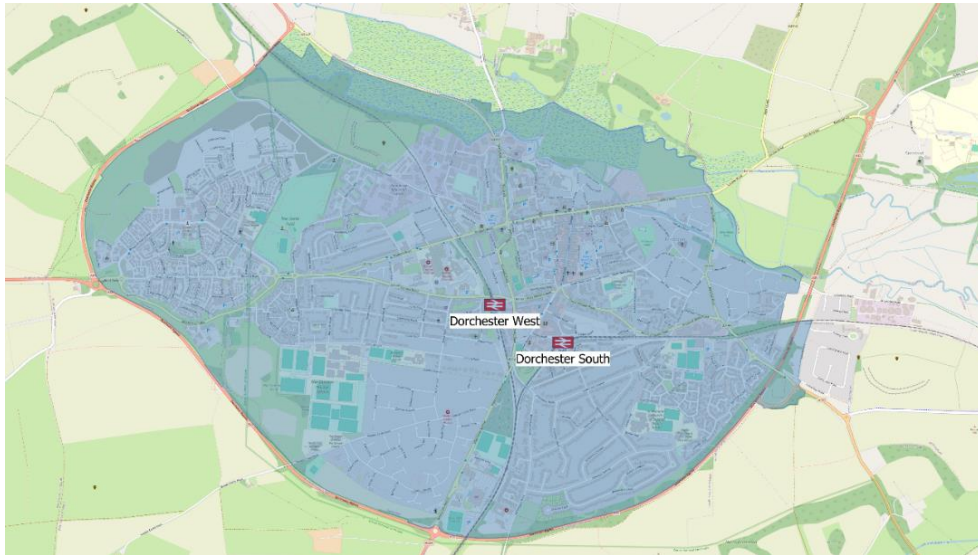


Figure 4 Map of Dorchester

The town has two railway stations, Dorchester South and Dorchester West, with each station offering services to and from Weymouth and other destinations to the North and East. Whereas Dorchester South (managed by South Western Railway) offers 2 trains per hour (tph) between Weymouth and London Waterloo, Dorchester West (managed by Great Western Railway) offers 0.5tph between Weymouth and Gloucester.

Overall passenger footfall at the stations was fairly steady until the Covid-19 pandemic. The inevitable sharp drop in patronage has seen a steep initial return which has now slowed to sit at around half its peak for Dorchester West (164,997 entries and exits in 2016/17, 82,196 in 2022/23), and around 75 % of its peak at Dorchester South (533,616 entries and exits in 2011/12, 395,886 in 2022/23).

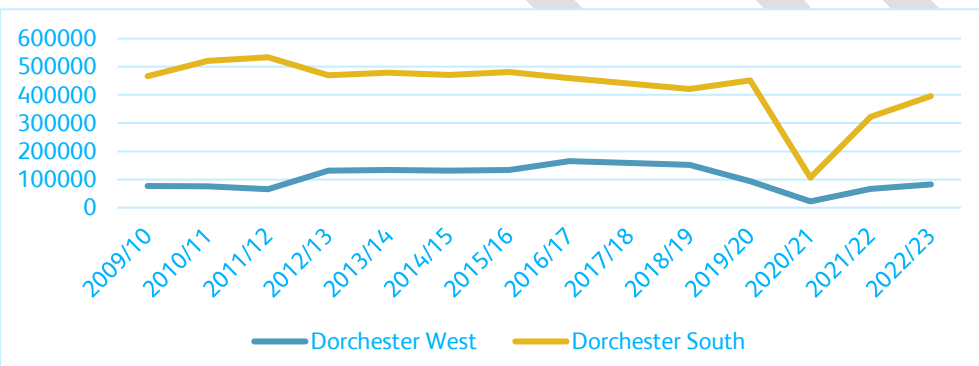


Figure 5 Graph of ORR Station Usage Data

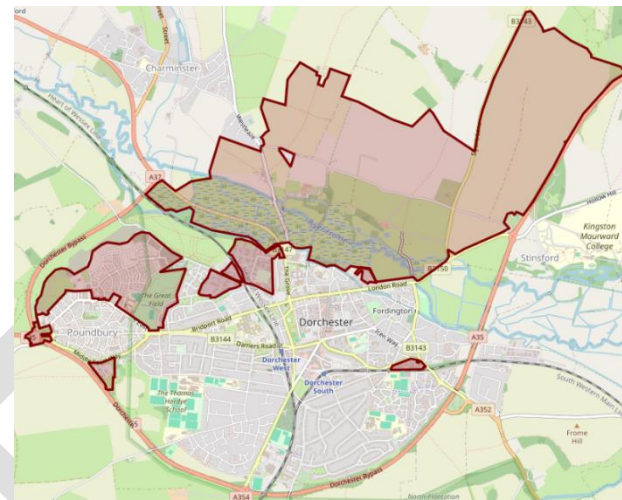


Figure 6 Map of Planned Housing Growth in Dorchester

The current Dorset local plan highlights planned developments both within, and on the border of Dorchester. One of these, to the North of the town, has proposed development for 2,500 new dwellings on the site. This development clearly has the potential to have a significant impact on the population of Dorchester and the number of passengers likely to require enhanced transport options and access the railway.

3.4 Dorchester South

Positioned 135 Miles, 70 Chains along the South West Mainline from London Waterloo, Dorchester South is the second to last station in the Down Direction before the line terminates at Weymouth. Dorchester South is only a short distance from Dorchester town centre's shops and attractions and offers good onward connections through bus and car parking facilities in the station forecourt.

The existing station comprises two bi-directional passenger platforms, a waiting room with ticket office and toilet facilities, a passenger car park with limited accessible parking bays, and a stepped footbridge.

Office for Rail and Road's Origin Destination data for 2022/23 lists the most popular destination stations for journeys from Dorchester South as Weymouth, London Waterloo, Bournemouth, and Poole. Passengers clearly, therefore, access the railway at Dorchester South in order to complete a range of journey types, not just long distance or short local journeys.

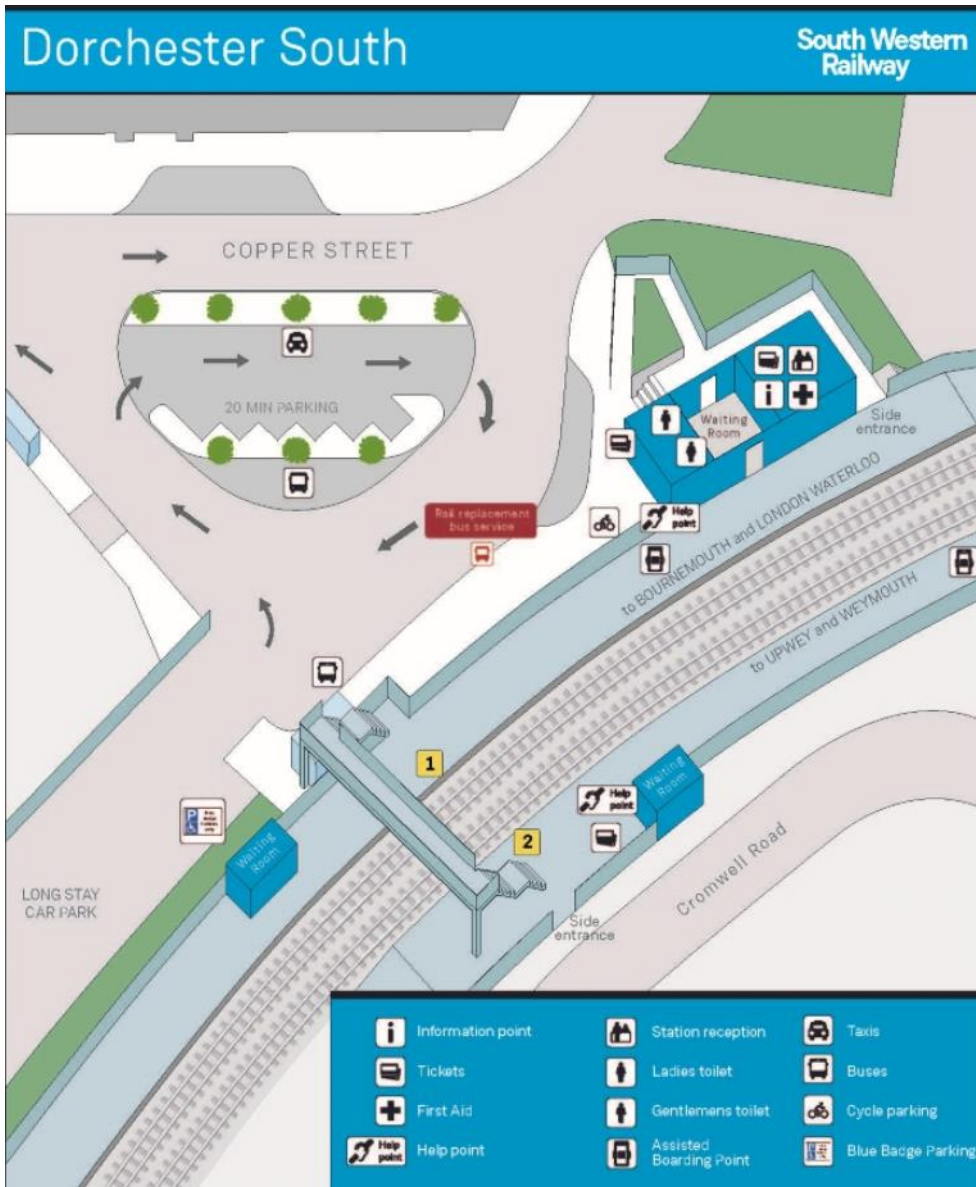


Figure 7 Dorchester South Station Map

3.5 Dorchester West

Positioned 161 Miles, 63 Chains from London Paddington via Swindon, Dorchester West is the second to last station on the Heart of Wessex Line before it terminates at Weymouth. Until May 2023, the line had a sporadic level of service making travel unattractive and interchange difficult. Recently, however, a regular 1 train every 2 hours (0.5tph) service was introduced making the line much more attractive to passengers.

Dorchester West station is well located within the town, being very close to the County Hospital, and only a short distance to the town centre and its local attractions. Owing to the station's historically low service provision, it does not boast a large range of passenger facilities and is unstaffed. The station comprises two platforms with sheltered waiting areas, passenger information help points, and bicycle storage racks on each platform. Whilst each platform has individual step-free access, the only connection between the two platforms is a stepped footbridge across the railway.

Office for Rail and Road's Origin Destination data for 2022/23 lists the most popular destination stations for journeys from Dorchester West as Weymouth and Bath Spa, though this should be caveated as not taking account of the timetable change of May 2023.

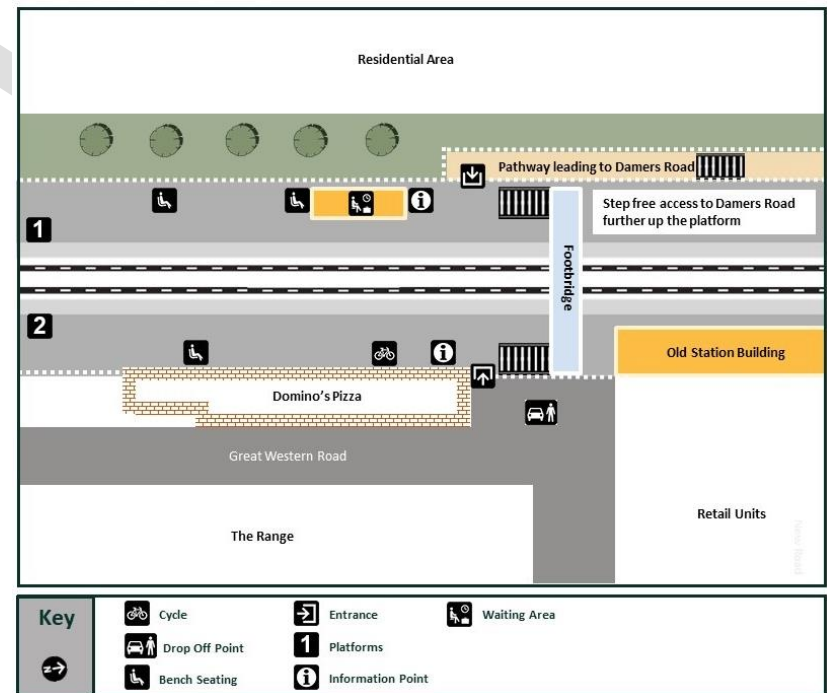


Figure 8 Dorchester West Station Map

3.6 Dorset Connectivity Strategic Study

[The Dorset Connectivity Strategic Study \(summary document available\)](#), explores connectivity on the South West Main Line and Heart of Wessex Line. Several issues on the lines were highlighted including Single Line sections, irregular calling patterns, line speeds, and interchange capability.

The study produced a number of recommendations including developing proposals for 1tph service on the Heart of Wessex Line, additional 2tph between Wareham and Brockenhurst, and ensuring a half-hourly regular service interval for Weymouth – Waterloo services. Whilst not yet in operation, these proposed service changes are still aspired, with Network Rail currently jointly developing an SOBC alongside Western Gateway to explore the viability of increasing service frequency on the Heart of Wessex Line. This SOBC document will explore in greater detail what is required to achieve the aspired 1tph service, as well as assessing the plans' feasibility.

These recommended service changes therefore have the potential to alter the way that people interact with stations affected, and potentially increase footfall at these stations. Dorchester South and West are therefore key as both stations would be affected by the recommendations of the Dorset Connectivity strategy.

It is within this strategic context, considered alongside the local authority's planning aspirations, that the Dorchester Stations Strategic Station Plan has been developed. Whilst many of the recommendations made within the following document could greatly improve passenger experience at the stations in the current context, they are recommended on the basis of wider strategic aspirations having been met.

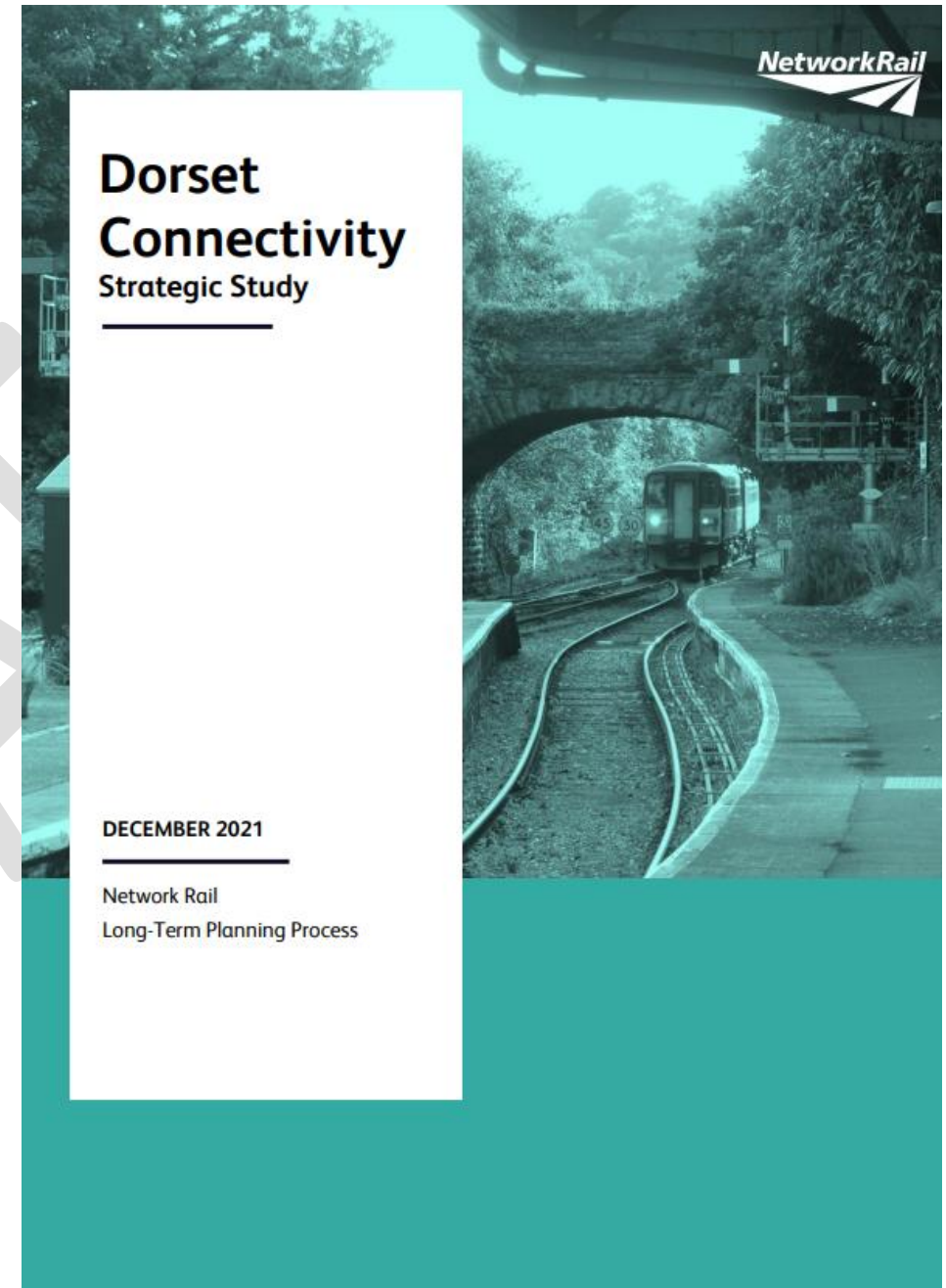


Figure 9 Dorset Connectivity Strategic Study



MAUMBURY
RINGS

4 Integration & Interchange

The first and last miles of a journey made by rail play a significant part in passengers' appetite to travel by rail again. Making access to the railway simpler and more convenient also opens up the mode for many who may not have previously been able to travel by rail. The strategic service enhancements noted above have the potential to deliver real benefits for users, so it is important to make them as integrated with passengers' choice of First and Last Mile as possible.

In the case of the two Dorchester stations in focus, a further consideration is the ease of interchange between the two stations themselves. Each station serves a different line with different destination options and journey types. Dorchester therefore plays a vital role as a key interchange location for passengers looking to interchange between the Heart of Wessex Line and South West Mainline. Whilst the official point of interchange for the two lines is Upwey, Dorchester provides the option for step free interchange without the need to travel all the way into – and back out of – Weymouth.

High quality integration and interchange is also a priority of the local authority. An objective of Dorset council's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) 2022¹ is to make "buses and the wider transport network more attractive, joined up and easy to use for everyone". This includes improving integration between all modes through coordination of timetables, introducing mobility hubs, and increasing connectivity between modes. A scheme previously supported by Dorset Council at Weymouth station saw improvements on the station forecourt, and bus stops installed much nearer to the station than was previously the case. These improvements included addition of a new waiting shelter and a real time information screen, making the overall experience of interchange between modes much more attractive.

Similarly, the Council has supported the development of improved active transport links between the stations in Dorchester along Fairfield Road. The importance of this link between stations is not solely for ease of interchange between rail lines, but is also very useful in providing passengers at Dorchester West station with the bus service levels provided at Dorchester South. This demonstrates the importance of various modes when examining Integration and Interchange, with three taken in turn below; Bus Interchange; Active Travel; Car Travel.

4.1 Bus Interchange

4.1.1 Dorchester South

At Dorchester South, there is one West-Bound bus stand within the station forecourt offering both local and long-distance bus and coach services. The station also offers a real-time bus departure screen within the booking hall itself for passengers to assess information on their onward travel options.

Bus	Operator	Route	Frequency
6	Damory Coaches	Dorchester – Poundbury – Dorchester	Half-Hourly
035	National Express	London – Weymouth	Daily
C2	First Wessex, Dorset & South Somerset	Dorchester – Colfox School	School Bus
CR5	South West Coaches	Dorchester – Sherborne – Yeovil	6 Per Day
CR8	Damory Coaches	Blandford – Dorchester – Weymouth	5 Per Day
CR9	Damory Coaches	Blandford – Winterborne Kingston – Bere Regis – Dorchester	4 Per Day
X51	First Wessex, Dorset & South Somerset	Weymouth King's Statue – Bridport Bus Station – Axminster Railway Station	2-Hourly

Table 2 Table of Bus Services at Dorchester South

Many of the bus services at Dorchester South are somewhat infrequent or limited with the latest-running service currently the X51 – its latest service calling at Dorchester South at 18:57. Trains run until beyond midnight, potentially leaving passengers arriving at the station without onward bus travel options. A review of bus services and timetables could prove useful in relation to the planned housing developments referred to in section 3.3 and the strategic service changes proposed for Dorchester West. Whilst there is currently a sufficient bus service towards Poundbury and the development planned there, there is no such route which would reach the planned development to the North of Dorchester. Given the high number of dwellings planned at that location, such a route linking the development to the railway stations at Dorchester should be considered as part of any future planning.

Similarly, Dorset Council's BSIP proposes greater timetable alignment between modes in order to make interchange easier for passengers. With proposed strategic service changes at Dorchester West and timetable regulation at Dorchester South, such alignment works could help to make bus/rail interchange a much more attractive prospect for passengers.

Wayfinding for onwards bus travel at Dorchester South is largely sufficient with clear signage on Platform 1 although there is less signage for passengers alighting on platform 2. If passengers leave the station through the platform 2 exit, they will find no bus stands

¹ [Dorset Bus Service Improvement Plan 2022 - Dorset Council](#)

available for onwards travel and so clearer signposting towards the station forecourt may be beneficial.

The bus shelter itself at Dorchester South is small without sufficient seating and provides little shelter in inclement weather. There may be scope therefore to encourage bus travel through improvements made to the shelter and potentially adding marketing/wayfinding for local attractions and onward travel.

4.1.2 Dorchester West



Figure 10 Bus Halt at Dorchester West

At Dorchester West, there is a single Eastbound bus halt beneath the railway on Damers Road (served by CR5, CR9). Dorchester South and its more numerous bus connections is, however, only 0.3 miles away across a relatively flat route. The main constraint on this route was historically the need to traverse Fairfield Road on which a busy car park is located, previously with no pedestrian path. Since completion of the first phase of the Fairfield Road development (covered in more detail in section 4.2.2), however, there is now a partial pedestrianisation of the road, with a new, wide footpath provided along the non-pedestrianised stretch. This makes the experience of walking, wheeling, or cycling between the two stations much easier and safer for all users.

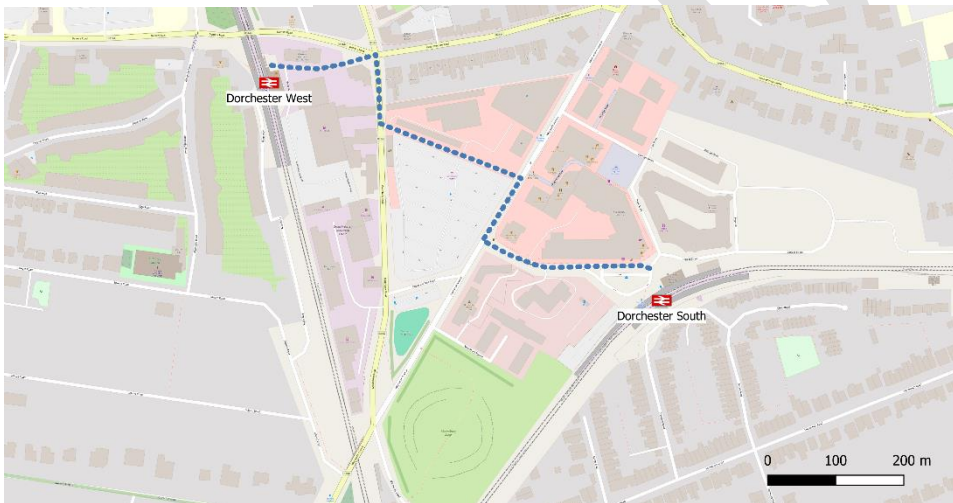


Figure 11 Walking Route Between Dorchester Stations

4.2 Active Travel

With both Dorchester stations being positioned relatively centrally to Dorchester town itself, the opportunity to advocate active travel means of First and Last Mile is clear. Encouraging active travel also has wider social and environmental benefits through reducing the number of people using private cars to make shorter journeys.

4.2.1 Cycling

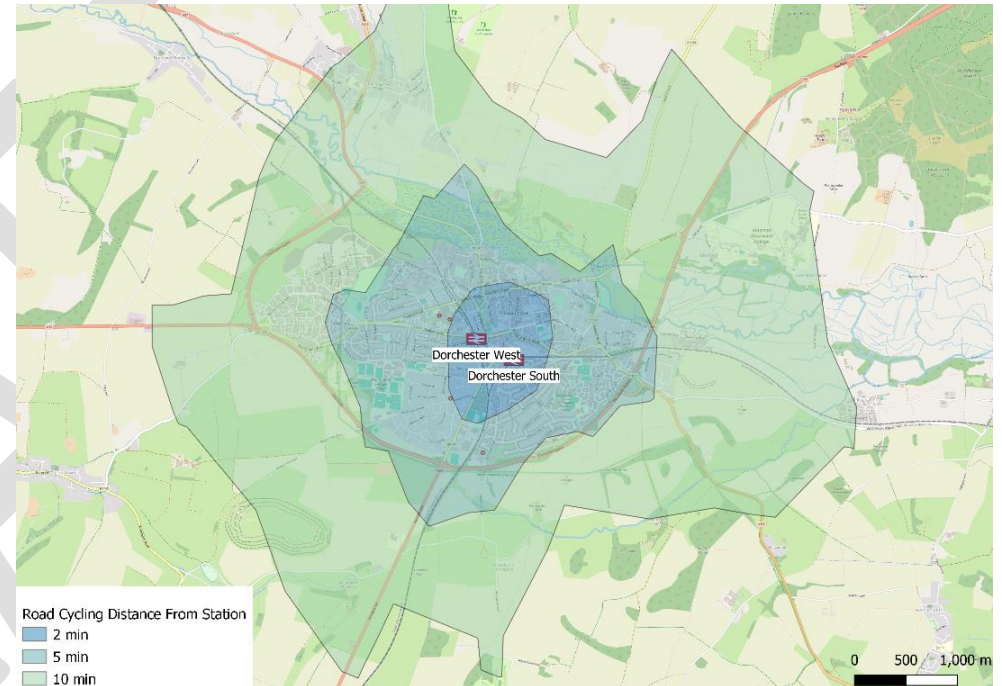


Figure 12 Sheffield Stands at Dorchester West

Figure 13 Map showing Road Cycling Catchments for Dorchester Stations

As figure 13 shows, the two stations are within 5 minutes cycle ride of each other, and around 10 minutes cycle to the planned developments North of Dorchester and in Poundbury. Encouraging cycling as a means of accessing rail from these developments is therefore of key strategic significance for reducing

reliance on private cars in the Dorchester area.

Each station also contains bicycle storage racks. At Dorchester West, there are 15 Sheffield Stands spread across platforms 1 and 2; at Dorchester South, there are 5 Sheffield stands and two cycle storage lockers. Although there has historically been more cycle storage, some is currently unavailable due to the ongoing Access for All (AfA) Mid-tier works. Ensuring sufficient storage and security for left bikes could encourage further use of these facilities and therefore more passengers making their first mile by bicycle.

National Cycle Network Routes 26 and 2 run through Dorchester, though neither reach the town's two railway stations. Ensuring sufficient signposting/cycle infrastructure is in place from these routes towards railway stations has the potential to encourage more passengers to access rail or their final destinations by sustainable means.



Figure 14 National Cycle Routes Around Dorchester

Dorset Council have plans to extend their 'Beryl Bike' docked cycle hire scheme to Dorchester and Weymouth in the immediate future. From a strategic perspective, this provides an excellent opportunity to encourage modal shift. Potential locations for these docks at the two railway stations have been identified at a very high level through development of this plan and align with the locations proposed by Dorset Council. The proposed site at Dorchester South risks being too close to the pavement kerb, and blocking easy access between the ticket office and bus shelter. This should be reviewed to ensure ease of access to both bus and railway facilities remains.

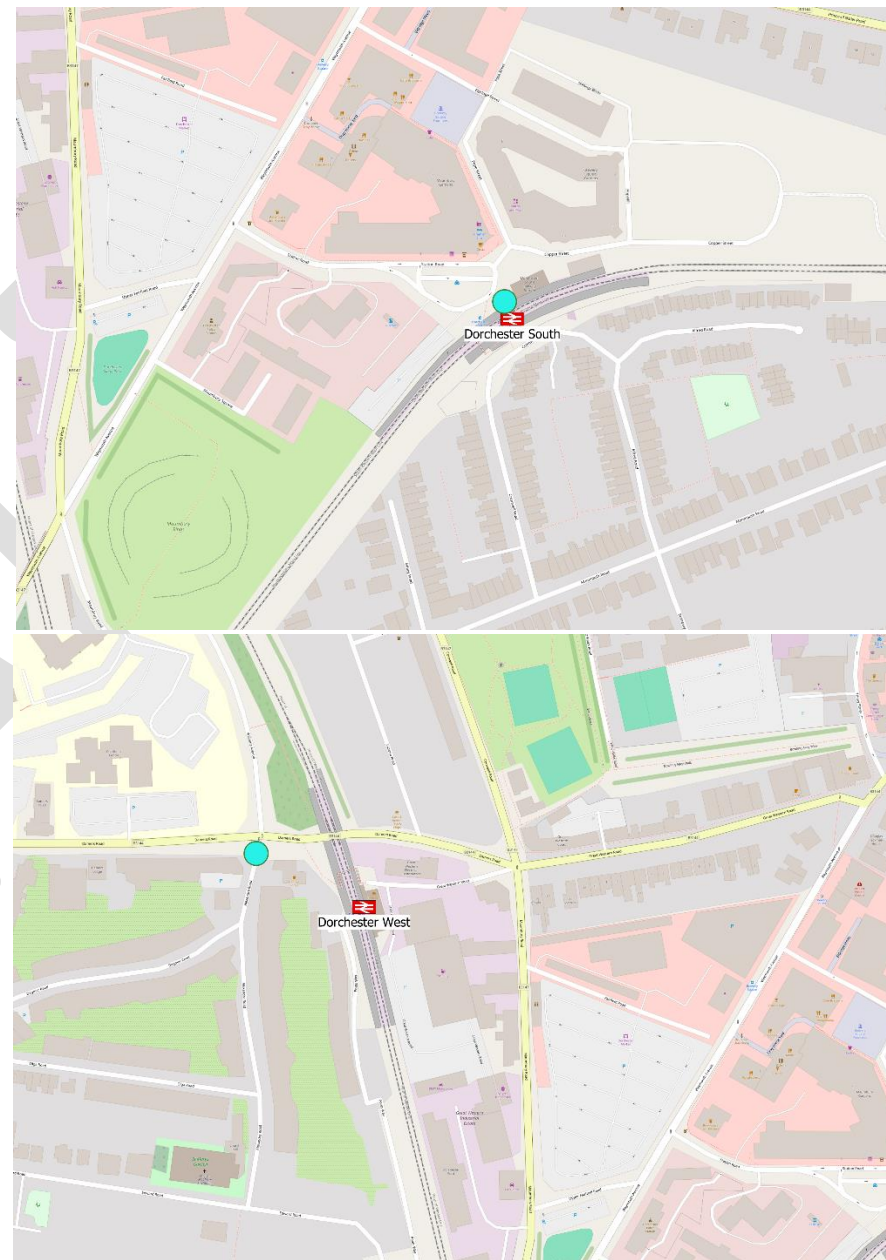


Figure 15 Location of Proposed Cycle Hire Scheme Stands at Dorchester Stations

4.2.2 Walking

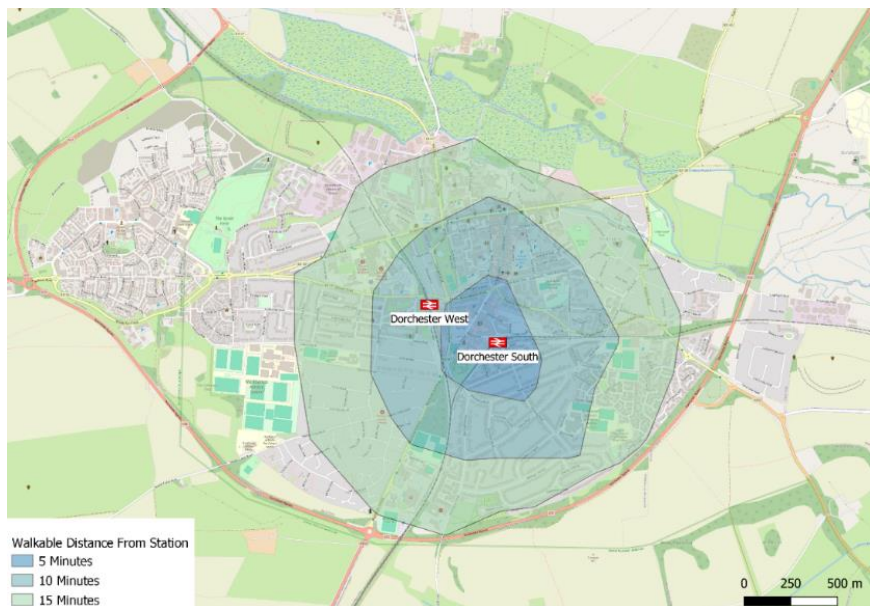


Figure 16 Map of Dorchester South Walking Catchment



Figure 17 Map of Dorchester West Walking Catchment

As figures 16 and 17 show, the two stations at Dorchester are within a walkable distance of each other, the town centre, and potentially the southern parts of the planned development North of Dorchester. In the National Rail Travel Survey (NRTS) of 2005/6, over 60% of respondents accessed the railway at Dorchester South by walking. Encouraging walking and wheeling as an alternative to the car in accessing the railway therefore has a strong background, and case for further growth.



Figure 18 Fairfield Road Pedestrian Route

As has already been referred to, Dorset Council's Fairfield Road redevelopment scheme is an excellent example of encouraging pedestrian travel. The scheme took Fairfield Road – a main link road between Dorchester West and Dorchester South – and significantly improved the safety and ease of walking and

wheeling along its route. This was achieved through the pedestrianisation of part of the road, and installation of a wide footpath with level access to pedestrian crossings on the remaining section. It is important that following this work, the local authority are able to ensure that this route remains free from obstacles for pedestrians at all times.

This scheme of improvement work is only the first phase. The second phase of work will look at landscaping the pedestrianised area with rain gardens and tree pits to ease run off from the car park site during rainfall.

Dorset Council also plans to explore feasibility of increased seating and cycle parking provision as well as reviewing the wayfinding provision along the route. In places, wayfinding signage is not at eye-level or is obscured by other signs, meaning that those unfamiliar with the area or with visual impairments may struggle to follow the signposted route. The use of clear, lower-level signage is therefore recommended for



Figure 19 Proposed Fairfield Road Enhancements

inclusion within the council's wayfinding review. It will also be beneficial for station facility operators SWR and GWR to review their promotion of the walking routes within stations.

The application of this thinking and process along other key corridors within the town could potentially transform people's ability to access not only the railway, but also key local amenities.

Dorset Council are currently developing a programme of works to improve road junction signals in order to improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity in Dorchester. Maumbury Junction² for example is set to see a much improved signal layout to aid pedestrian crossing. Similar initiatives along routes to/from Dorchester stations should be encouraged as best-practice in encouraging pedestrian and cycle station access.

4.3 Car Travel



Figure 20 Dorchester South Station Car Park

According to 2021 census results, 46 % of households in Dorchester have 1 car or van and 33 % have 2 cars or vans. The majority of Dorchester residents therefore have access to a car, and as much as alternative modes of accessing the railway should be encouraged, this is not always possible. Many surrounding areas of Dorchester and west Dorset are rural with little-to-no bus services, where Dorchester serves as the only suitable access to the railway. Similarly, many people accessing the railway are physically unable to engage in public transport or active travel due to age, disability, or various other factors. Car Parking (an particularly accessible parking) is therefore a key consideration in developing strategy at Dorchester stations.

² [Maumbury Crossroads junction improvements - Dorset Council](#)

As noted in section 5 of this document, there is currently vacant railway land adjacent to the existing Dorchester South station car park which has previously seen plans for conversion into additional car parking. This could potentially more than double the current car parking provision at Dorchester South. Planned housing growth in an around Dorchester may see the requirement for car parking at Dorchester South grow as the number of passengers accessing the railway from outside of Dorchester itself grows. Options for developing this could include progress through the rail industry's Industry Revenue Generating Investment (IRGI) pipeline.

At Dorchester West, there is no rail or local authority owned land available for conversion into a car park. However, the Council owned car park on Fairfield Rd could provide an opportunity for parking bays within relatively easy reach of the stations. Alternatively, it may prove useful to advertise an extended car park at Dorchester South as providing parking for both Dorchester stations. The Fairfield Road works would aid the interchange of passengers from the car park to Dorchester West, however this would likely not prove a suitable option for passengers with reduced mobility and an accessible parking solution closer to Dorchester West would be preferable.



Figure 21 Fairfield Road Car Park

Despite its lack of car parking provision, Dorchester West does have a pick up/drop off point on Williams Avenue at the foot of platform 2's access ramp. Given the constraints of Great Western Road for traffic, use of the drop off point on Williams Avenue should be promoted, particularly for passengers with reduced mobility who are intending to travel north of Dorchester. It is recommended that this promotion is achieved through highways and pedestrian signage.

4.4 Recommendations

Recommendation	Additional Information
Station to station active travel link improvement works	Continued commitment from the local authority and station facility operator to improved walking, wheeling, and cycling links between Dorchester South and Dorchester West. The first phase of the Fairfield Road scheme has vastly improved the experience for pedestrians making this journey, and continued development through phase 2 and beyond are encouraged. Ensure that signage and access to these routes are appropriate.
Car Parking enhancement	Explore viability of extending Dorchester South car park westward into vacant railway land whether simply extending Dorchester South parking provision, or also advertising as parking for Dorchester West. Explore potential funding option for this proposal. Explore feasibility of advertising bays within Fairfield Road car park as Dorchester West accessible parking.
Links to new developments	Ensure sustainable links to railway stations from proposed new developments around Dorchester throughout the planning process.
Cycle-hire scheme input	Provide industry input to Dorset Council's developing Beryl Bike hire scheme in
Improved bus service visibility and wayfinding	Enhance signposting towards local bus services, particularly at Dorchester West and on Platform 2 at Dorchester South. Explore options for waiting facility improvements at Dorchester South.
Improved wayfinding to drop off point	Enhance signposting towards pick up/drop off point at Dorchester West on Williams Avenue for passengers with reduced mobility travelling North.

Table 3 Summary Table of Integration & Interchange Recommendations



5 Property & Sustainability

There is little in the way of Network Rail owned property around Dorchester West, so the potential for development of either commercial or community use is limited. At Dorchester South however, there is some potential for the use of railway-owned land.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, there were advanced plans for development of land adjacent to the existing Dorchester South car park into additional car parking for the station. The currently vacant plot has an area of around 1830m² which has the potential to double the existing (1500m²) car parking provision at Dorchester South. Local users have made note of aspirations for this land to create an improved link between Dorchester South station and the popular Maumbury Rings site to the South of the station.

The landmark borders the station's boundaries, but the only way to currently reach the site from Dorchester South is along Weymouth Avenue. Should this land be redeveloped into additional station car parking, consideration should be given to allowing a safe route of access through the car park to the Maumbury Rings site.

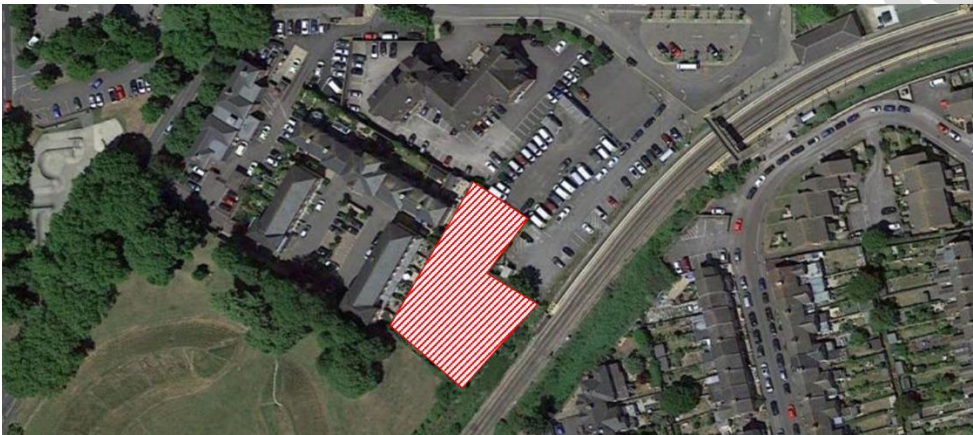


Figure 22 Proposed Land at Dorchester South for Car Park Development

As part of the Access for All (AfA) mid-tier scheme, SWR are currently developing the former Red Star shed at Dorchester South into additional sheltered waiting area on platform 1. The scheme will also see the ticket office redeveloped to improve access and provide additional space for passengers, as well as an additional waiting shelter installed on platform 2. The plans do not provide scope for further commercial development of any other part of the station.

Each station has a level of community engagement. Dorchester West has a 'Friends Of' volunteer group organised by the South Wessex CRP, while Dorchester South has nature

sites on Platform2 with bird boxes and bug hotels located within the flower beds on the platform.

5.1 Recommendations

Dorchester South Car Park extension	Explore feasibility of extending Dorchester South car park into adjacent vacant railway land. Explore possibility of including pedestrian access to adjacent Maumbury Rings site.
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Table 4 Summary Table of Property & Sustainability Recommendations



Brewery Square 4 miles

Dorchester South 4 miles

Dorchester West 1 mile

Town Centre 5 miles

Library 10 miles

Salisbury Fields 10 miles

Borough Gardens
Dorchester Keep Military Museum
Dorset History Centre
Dorset Council
Roman Town House

6 Station Facilities

6.1 Dorchester South

Facilities at Dorchester South currently include the following:

- Ticket Machines and staffed ticket office
- Customer Help Point
- Waiting Room and shelters
- Customer Toilet & Accessible Toilet
- Car Park
- Accessible Parking
- Bicycle Storage

As previously mentioned, at time of writing there are a series of ongoing AfA mid-tier improvement works at Dorchester South. These will improve facilities at Dorchester South and include additional waiting shelters on each platform (more detail can be found in section 7.1). The facilities which Dorchester South does currently lack (i.e retail and refreshment vendors) can mostly be found in the adjacent Brewery Square development. As such, facility provision at Dorchester South is sufficient for the current (and aspired) level of service, and no new facilities at the station are recommended within this study.

6.2 Dorchester West

Dorchester West Facilities currently include the following:

- Customer Help Points
- Waiting shelters
- Bicycle Storage

There are not currently any plans to improve the facility provision at Dorchester West beyond Customer Information upgrades as the station's facilities are largely sufficient for the level of traffic which currently serves the station. That said, should the level of service increase to the aspired 1tph level outlined in the Dorset Connectivity Strategic Study, it is likely that additional facilities may be required, particularly around ticket vending facilities.

There are currently no toilet facilities at Dorchester West Station. Although provision of passenger toilets would be preferred at the station, the lack of station buildings is an obvious constraint to this. There are public toilets (including a Radar Key toilet) a short distance away on Fairfield Road and as services and passenger numbers increase at the station, it may be pertinent to establish wayfinding from the station, pointing passengers towards these facilities.



Figure 23 Public Toilets on Fairfield Road

6.3 Recommendations

Dorchester West passenger facilities	Explore what level of passenger facility provision/enhancement would be required to accommodate 1tph level of service at Dorchester West.
Dorchester West wayfinding	Explore opportunity to develop wayfinding at Dorchester West to support passengers in interchange and finding nearby amenities.

Table 5 Summary Table of Station Facilities Recommendations



Dorchester South

BREWERY

SQUARE

Dorchester South

7 Accessibility

7.1 Dorchester South

Whilst both platforms at Dorchester South are individually accessible by step-free means, there is no direct, step-free interchange between the two platforms. This means that should a passenger with reduced mobility need to access platform 2 from the platform 1 side of the station, they must undertake a 0.5 mile detour. Similarly, a passenger alighting on Platform 2, wanting to access local bus services from Dorchester South bus stand will have to either use the stepped footbridge or undertake the longer route in order to access the bus shelter.

Due to the location of Dorchester South station, and the level of service at the station, trial services have historically been routed to serve platform 1 in both directions as a way of overcoming this challenge. This fundamentally limits the capability of the station to cope with disruption or any future increase in service levels at the station. From a strategic perspective, it would therefore be preferable for an accessible footbridge to be installed at the station to allow for step-free interchange between the two platforms.

Dorchester South was listed in the Department for Transport's long list for Control Period 7 AfA development funding. This means that funding will be released in order to produce feasibility work on the installation of accessibility improvements at the station – a very positive step towards improved accessibility at Dorchester South.

There is an opportunity through this development work to assess passenger access to the station platform and bridge facility. Should the improved interchange facility be in the same location as the current bridge, station access point closer to the landing may benefit passengers wishing to access platform 2 through removing the need to walk from either platform access point. This could prove particularly useful for passengers arriving by or interchanging with bus services.

Work is currently also underway on an AfA Mid-tier scheme at Dorchester South which will redesign the booking hall and improve step free access to platform 1 through construction of a new ramp. The scheme will also see improved passenger waiting facilities within the booking hall and on platforms, as well as two accessible parking bays moved from the current car park to the front of the station.

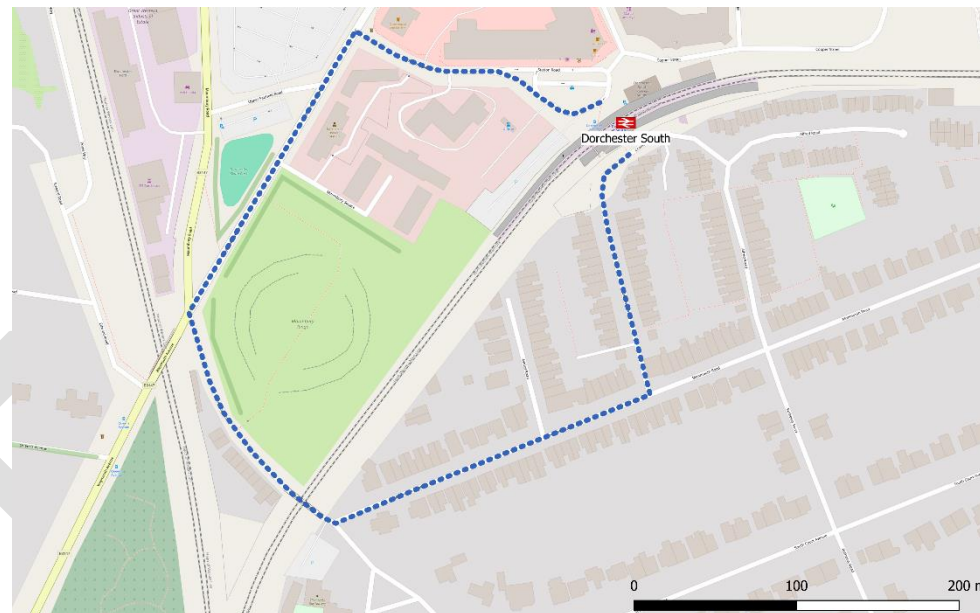


Figure 24 Map of Step-Free Route Between Platforms at Dorchester South

7.2 Dorchester West

Like Dorchester South, Dorchester West station has step free access to the individual platforms, but interchange between the two platforms is only possible through using the stepped footbridge or a 0.2 mile step free route along Great Western Road, Damers Road, and Williams Avenue. Whilst step-free interchange across platforms at Dorchester West would be preferred, the current and aspired level of service, as well as the lack of facilities at either side of the station, means that such a development is not likely to come forward in the near-term.

Platform 1 at Dorchester West has an accessible ramp to a designated drop-off point on Williams Avenue. This provides a clear and convenient route for passengers joining or leaving the railway at Dorchester West to access Platform 1. On Platform 2, there is also level access to the street, however some users have noted issues around vehicles creating an obstruction at this station entrance. There may be a need to work with local land owners to ensure that clear access can be maintained to Platform 2 and ensure that all passengers have access to the railway.

Aside from access, Dorchester West does provide passengers with information help points fitted with induction loops for those with hearing impairments. This, combined with staff on trains, is largely sufficient for the current level of service and even an increase to 1tph.

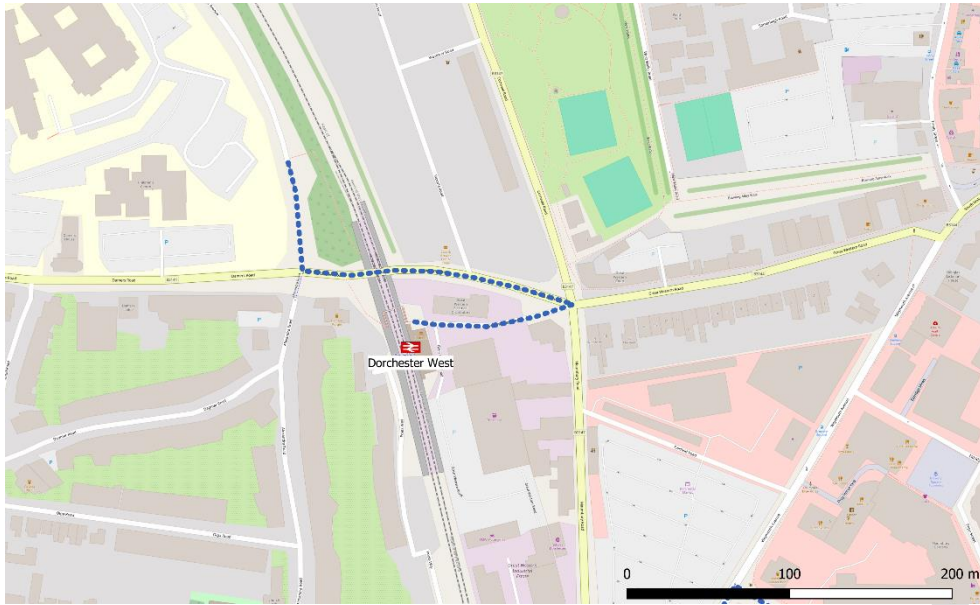


Figure 25 Map of Step-Free Route Between Platforms at Dorchester West

7.3 Recommendations

Step Free Platform Access	Support planned development of Dorchester South's CP7 AfA proposal following confirmation of development funding. Support long-term aspirations for step-free platform interchange at Dorchester West
Ensure passenger access at Dorchester West	Ensure all passengers are able to access Dorchester West through its Platform 2 entrance.

Table 6 Summary Table of Accessibility Recommendations



Way out ↑
Williams Avenue

In case of fire

2

209

8 Recommendations & Next Steps

This document has explored a number of areas for potential strategic improvements across Dorchester stations. Whilst these are framed in the context of strategic recommendations and planned developments in the area, this does not mean that many of them should not be considered as relevant for the current level of service. Improvements, particularly around accessibility, have the potential to transform passengers' experience of the railway and open the mode to travellers previously unable to access the railway. In a time of suppressed rail demand and limited funding forthcoming for enhancement, improvements which have the potential to open up the market should be pursued wherever possible.

This is not a task for the railway alone, and partners in local authority, government and the private sector have a valuable role to play in the development of strategic improvements. The development of Fairfield Road's phase 1 has shown the important part that these partners play in helping to ensure easier access to the railway outside of the rail industry scope area and this document aims to build on such schemes to ensure a connected strategy across the rail industry and its partners to ensure that the railway offering to passengers is fit for purpose.

To develop the recommendations of this document further, focus is required and as such, recommendations set forward have been prioritised within the table below. These recommendations being highlighted does not detract from the importance of other proposals put forward, rather these have the potential to further unlock passenger access to the railway and therefore help us to make the case for further improvements over time.

Enhanced Wayfinding	Improve passenger experience when navigating within and between stations through signposting at accessible levels without obstruction. Encourage use of pedestrian and bus routes for shorter journeys.	Work with local authority, rail user groups and operators to review wayfinding provision to ensure that it meets requirements. Where possible, work with existing schemes and projects to influence wayfinding design and provision.
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Table 7 Priority Recommendations Summary Table

Recommendation	Benefit	Next Steps
Step Free Platform Access	Allow passengers with reduced mobility to access all station facilities and facilities within immediate surrounds of station without the need for lengthy diversions.	Support next steps of Dorchester South's CP7 AfA development. Explore viability of producing step-free cross platform access at Dorchester West and ensure that passengers continue to be able to access the station at existing entrances.
Car Parking Strategy	Improve access to railway for passengers who rely on private cars for First Mile. Potential revenue benefits. Potential to provide allocated parking for Dorchester West where currently none exists.	Explore funding options for development of car park options. Work with local authority and operators to explore appetite for advertising accessible parking bays on existing car parks for railway use.

Strategic Station Plan:
Dorchester Stations
July 2024

V0.3



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