



## Dorchester Civic Society

An Independent Voice

Registered Charity No. 268636

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Dear Councillor

I am writing to all Town Councillors on the subject of the District Council's current strategy for retail development in Dorchester's town centre. I understand that you will be debating this matter next week.

As you are probably already aware, this strategy includes provision for new retail units on the Fairfield car park/market site in Weymouth Avenue. In the view of the Civic Society this would be the wrong location for any significant level of new shopping floorspace because it would divert footfall and spending away from existing town centre shops and, as a result, would harm the overall attractiveness and viability of the existing core retail area of the town. In this respect it would also be contrary to established policies contained in the adopted Local Plan and in national planning guidance.

The Society has recently been in discussions with the District Council on this subject, but to date the Society has not received satisfactory responses to questions such as:

- what evidence is there of a need for a significant retail development away from the town centre?
- how would convenient pedestrian linkages between Fairfield and the town centre be achieved?
- why has the potential for making better use of existing town centre sites not been fully explored?
- what (alternative?) provision would be made for the market?

The Society applauds the District Council's commitment to producing a comprehensive strategy for, inter alia, enhancing the retail function of Dorchester's town centre, but is strongly of the view that the proposal for Fairfield is, at this time, premature, especially in view of the lack of any transparent evidence to support it.

Thank you for taking the time to read this message.

Peter Mann

Chairman, Dorchester Civic Society