

# YARMOUTH, ISLE OF WIGHT

**Pedestrian review – Carried out by Living Streets on behalf of Yarmouth Town Council**

**March 2025**



We are Living Streets, the charity for everyday walking. Our mission is to achieve a better walking environment and inspire people to walk more.





# Living Streets

We are Living Streets, the UK charity for everyday walking.

We want to create a walking nation, free from congested roads and pollution, reducing the risk of preventable illness and social isolation and making walking the natural choice. We believe that a walking nation means progress for everyone.

Our ambition is to get people of all generations to enjoy the benefits that this simple act brings and to ensure all our streets are fit for walking.

## **Pedestrian expert review of Yarmouth**

Living Streets was commissioned by Yarmouth Town Council to review the town's streets for pedestrian use. We bring experience in assessing streets for how well they meet the varied needs of pedestrians, including walking for movement and wheeling with mobility aids, using streets as social and commercial spaces. We look at the impacts of traffic, weather and the various demands on the public spaces which streets provide and offer recommendations to guide improvements to make streets work better for all those who live in, work on and enjoy using them.



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# 1 Executive summary

Between 5-7 March 2025 Living Streets spent time in Yarmouth and identified and documented issues that we believe impact walking and wheeling. Existing conditions and scope for improvement were assessed considering Healthy Streets framework indicators. Living Streets has provided recommendations to address issues identified. Issues, impacts and recommendations are mapped in detail at [https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1Lh\\_NS94EGTnWcTS2BSE\\_O7Ft0plxNyE&usp=sharing](https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1Lh_NS94EGTnWcTS2BSE_O7Ft0plxNyE&usp=sharing) and these details are also provided the accompanying spreadsheet.

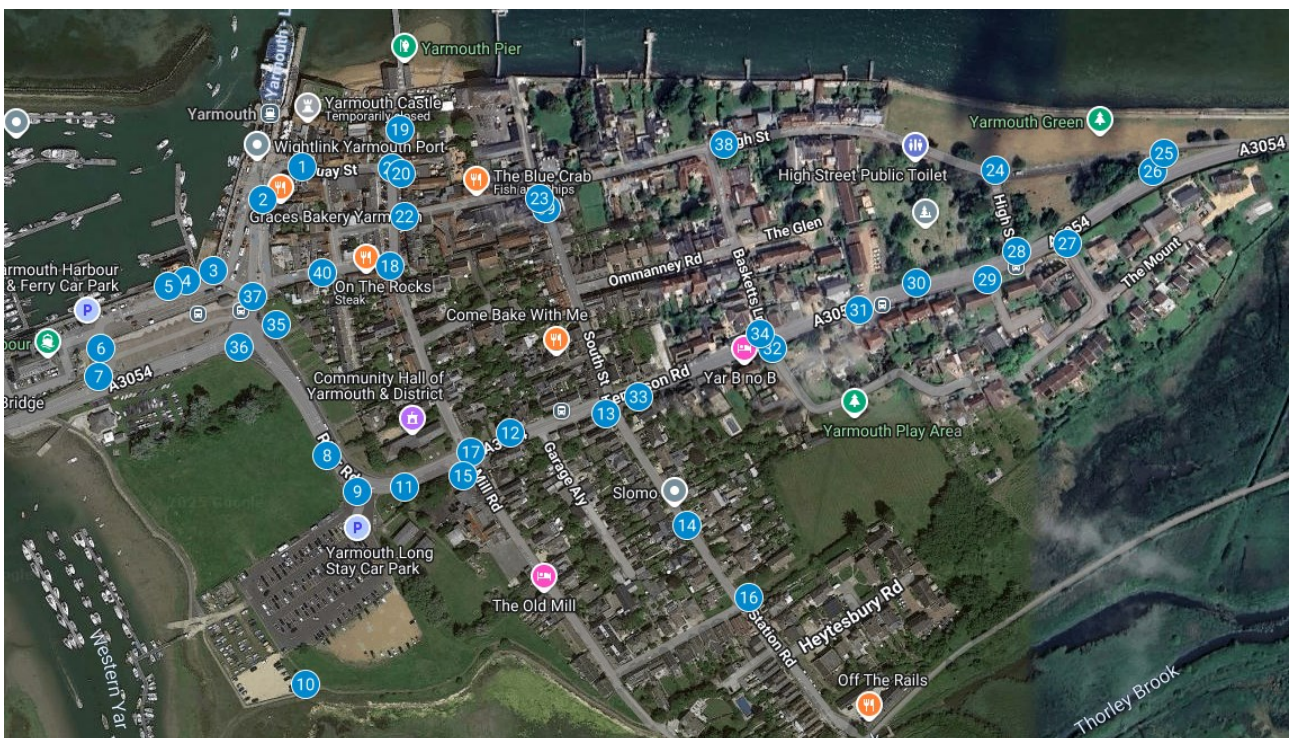


Fig 1: Sample of [interactive map](#) with notes and photos

## Successes and opportunities

Yarmouth is a compact and historic town with rich character of streets, buildings, local businesses and community including being popular for visitors. With a street layout mostly developed before motor vehicles the streets have a strong human scale and are full of visual interest and opportunities for social connection. This is a strong part of the appeal for both visitors and residents and this character and foundation can be built on to continue developing the town as a vibrant and attractive place to live, visit and run businesses in.

## Challenges and issues

The compact layout of streets and public squares becomes a challenge when motor vehicles are used in significant volumes in these spaces. In most places it should be feasible to accommodate efficient access by motor vehicle where it is needed while still maintaining a calm, safe and welcoming space for people not using vehicles. To achieve this there are some locations of particular friction to address:

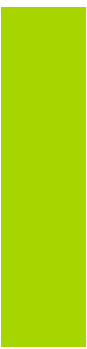
- **Quay Street and Bridge Road** beside the port being used for vehicle traffic dropping and picking up people from the ferry. Limited widths of footways and volumes of pedestrians mean people need to walk in the carriageway, especially on Quay Street, and the amount of traffic and design of the street layout does not appear to make this as comfortable as it could be.
- **St James' Square, Market Square and Pier Street** where the balance of space allocated to parking and vehicle movement dominates most of the space. Around 80-85% of the width of the squares is used by or prioritised for vehicles. This limits pedestrian movement across the space, reduces opportunities to linger and spend time including sitting in the squares, and affects the visibility of the buildings and businesses surrounding the squares.
- **Accessing the town from River Road car park.** This is the route for pedestrians coming to the town from the southwest, including most people using the long-stay car park. It runs alongside the main road and has cross it and when approaching the town from this direction gives limited appeal and priority for pedestrians. Traffic on the main road causes noise and danger due to speed of vehicles, and the crossing and footway put pedestrians close to traffic and don't give a comfortable route. Although only being around 170m from the car park to the town, a couple of minutes walk for many, the quality of the route may reduce the propensity to use the car park as an attractive alternative to parking in the town centre.
- **Main road as a barrier for pedestrians** living in the rest of the town and getting to services like Off The Rails, the playground and future development at the old school site. Traffic speed means pedestrian access along the main road or crossing it can be unpleasant or difficult. There is one controlled crossing but this has poor footway access on one side. For most of the way through Yarmouth this road has carriageway wide enough to encourage driving at over the 30mph limit and has few measures to reduce traffic speed. Pedestrian access across side roads is poor in several places with wide junction layouts, missing dropped kerbs and limited visibility.

## Other issues affecting the walking environment:

- **Entrance to River Road car park** is a wide carriageway and challenging for pedestrians to cross comfortably.
- **Kerb steps on footway** at parking area at end of High Street by Yarmouth Green. Without a level surface these create obstruction for pedestrians especially people using mobility aids.
- **Lighting** is generally good through much of the town but there were unlit parts of South Street and Victoria Street which could limit pedestrian comfort.
- **Shelter and greenery** is limited in many streets and there could be potential to introduce these elements to several streets which can provide shelter and shade and help cool the space in hot weather.
- **Seating** is available in key visitor locations like the harbour side and some in St James Square but many streets do not have any seating and providing more of this could make spaces feel more welcoming and enable people to stop and rest.

## Key recommendations

- **Minimise vehicle traffic circulating** through the central town streets (Quay Street, Bridge Road, St James Street) by providing ferry drop off and pick up arrangements slightly further inland. Options for this include space in the bus station area or as part of a redesigned River Road (between the roundabout and the car park). Dedicated disabled access for drop-off and pick up should be retained in a similar location to where it is now. If it is possible to negotiate it with the port owners it may be feasible to provide drop off-off space on Bridge Road similar to where it is now, with the direction of traffic reversed on Bridge Road and with vehicles exiting this area via the ferry exit lane route.
- **Quay Street** could then be designed as a pedestrian street and regulated in a similar way to the section of High Street where vehicles are prohibited but still allowed for deliveries and residential access. Disabled parking spaces should also be provided. The layout of Quay Street may benefit from a single-surface approach to avoid stepped kerbs and allow free movement for pedestrians to the entrances and shop windows and through the whole space. Occasional street furniture like benches, bins, cycle racks, planters or trees would provide additional benefits to people using the street as well as limiting vehicle speeds by creating a mildly chicaned route for drivers to follow through the space.
- **River Road from the car park to Bridge Road** should be considered for developing as a pedestrian gateway route to the town. This would provide a more



comfortable and welcoming route for those who currently walk this way and use the car park as well as aiming to enhance the appeal of parking outside the town centre to support moving some of the parking spaces out of the Market Square and St James Square. This route should include measures to reduce vehicle speeds on the main road to 20mph by narrower carriageway and some horizontal deflection to reduce long straight stretches of carriageway. The crossing point should be improved with level surface and zebra crossing or signal controlled crossing. Consider possibility for widening footway using some of the grass verge area and adding trees, planting or other street furniture like seating between the footway and the carriageway.

- **Create public spaces in the squares** by reallocating much of the approximately 24 parking spaces and carriageway space to become quality paved pedestrian space. This could then include seating and tables, planting and trees to provide shade and space for people including for summer visitors. This could also accommodate outside seating and tables for cafes and bars. See Living Streets Pedestrian Pound report for more on economic benefits of prioritising people in public spaces like these. Some parking should be retained, with numbers of dedicated disabled spaces and delivery bays increased to make these essential vehicle uses easier. Vehicle access through would also be retained for accessing Pier Street parking and Quay Street. However with reduced parking use and removing general through traffic on Quay Street vehicle movements should be reduced and two-way vehicle access could be provided with a single lane carriageway with potential passing place as needed.
- **Traffic speed on A3054** should be reduced to 20mph throughout the Yarmouth area to reduce noise and danger from moving vehicles. This will make it easier to cross and safer at side road junctions for people walking across as well as drivers pulling out. Design of the carriageway should be updated to enable driving at no more than this speed, which may be done with narrowing of lanes, central islands and visual narrowing using margin strips of textured surface.

## 2 Approach

### Healthy Streets indicators



The Healthy Streets framework provides a holistic set of indicators and measures to consider how well streets are supporting healthy communities. It has been commissioned and adopted by the UK Department for Transport and many local authorities across the country. Our staff are trained and qualified to Practitioner and Designer standards in using the framework.



Fig 2: Healthy Streets framework indicators

Yarmouth has many streets which do well on visual character and things to see and do and has great potential for the rest of the indicators as long as motor traffic is managed well and kept from dominating.

### **Everyone feels welcome**

Streets are public spaces and it is important that they can be used by everyone with no one being excluded. This is the result of many of the other indicators being met, and also is enabled by ensuring that streets cater for everyone including people with mobility impairments. This is particularly relevant for making sure step-free access is available at junctions and that there is enough space on footways for people using mobility aids to pass other people. It is also supported by providing dedicated disabled parking spaces.

### **Easy to cross**

To make it easy and convenient for pedestrians to use a street it needs to support safe crossing in the places people need it. This is important where traffic flows are higher or faster. The main road in Yarmouth is where this needs most attention and can be



improved by reducing vehicle speeds and revising layouts of junctions at side roads and the car park. Key crossing locations can also be improved including the controlled crossing near the school and the crossing places between the car park and the town and the bus station and the town.

## **Shade and shelter**

For people to use streets in all conditions there needs to be protection from both strong sun and from rain. This can be from trees in the street, bus shelters at stops and also awnings and other public structures which give shelter especially around seating. Yarmouth has relatively little public trees and there is good scope to improve this with trees being part of improving pedestrian space in the town squares and could be added along the main road and in streets like Bridge Road.

## **Places to stop and rest**

For some people to use streets it is essential to have regular opportunities to sit and rest. Good provision of seating also helps to encourage people to spend time in a place and to feel relaxed. There is a good range of seating around the harbour and some in other places with views but there is potential for more seating on public streets and squares and at intervals along the main road such as at bus stops.

## **Not too noisy**

Traffic noise affects people's health and limits how comfortable it is to walk or spend time on streets. Reducing traffic noise can make an area more attractive and welcoming to encourage people to visit and spend time there. The main causes of traffic noise are high volumes of traffic and the speed of vehicles. Keeping traffic below 20mph can help minimise noise especially on the main road.

## **People choose to walk and cycle**

By making walking and cycling convenient and attractive options it can help enable people to build regular activity into daily routes. This can also be part of longer trips and to and from public transport or parking options which are out of the town centre. Providing for comfortable footway and minimising vehicle traffic in narrower or busier streets can make walking a more appealing option.

## **People feel safe**

For people to feel welcome and relaxed it is important that they do not have to worry about their safety. This can relate to both risk from traffic, especially when it is fast moving or in close proximity, and also social safety by feeling that there are enough other people around or potentially overlooking the street to avoid a sense of isolation. This is helped by

dense layouts of buildings with windows facing towards streets and the historic layout of Yarmouth makes this work well in most areas. Some places like along the main road towards the east the houses are set back from the road and this could make walking along the road less comfortable.

### **Things to see and do**

People like to walk through and spend time in spaces which are visually and socially interesting. The visual character of the street and buildings surrounding it as well as local shops and services and natural elements like trees and planting all add to this. Yarmouth has strong character which makes much of its streets highly attractive to visit and use regularly and this should be maximised by ensuring people have easy access to walk and wheel through these spaces and ensure that highway elements like signage and parked vehicles are not dominating.

### **People feel relaxed**

If a street environment is dirty or noisy or difficult to safely navigate it can make people feel anxious. This is closely related to other indicators like noise and feeling welcome. While needing a collection of factors to achieve, which many of the other indicators help point towards, when people are feeling relaxed it is a good sign that street environment is healthy and working well.

### **Clean air**

Our health is affected by dirty air and this affects some people with health problems and children particularly. It is caused by motor traffic especially where volumes of vehicles are high and speed of traffic is high, as well as regular heavy vehicle use like buses and trucks. The main road is likely to be the main area where air quality is an issue as well as the bus station. Limiting traffic speed on the main road should reduce air pollution. Beyond the scope of streets the ferry is likely to contribute significantly to air pollution in the town.

## **3 Next steps**

To explore the potential for some key recommendations in this report it may be valuable to do further research into the usage of the town centre and certain streets. This should

include counts of pedestrian users and vehicles passing and stopping to service premises in Quay Street, and Market Square and St James Square.

Surveys could be made of how many customers visit businesses by different forms of travel and if they have driven which areas of parking they have used.

This may help give a clearer picture of how much existing trade is coming from different types of street use.

Living Streets has produced a [Pedestrian Pound report](#) with detailed information and case studies of a range of locations which have improved the public realm, often with reduced direct access for vehicles, and experienced benefits to business. Different locations have different needs and strengths which mean developments to support pedestrian use need to be shaped around the local context. It appears that Yarmouth, and especially the central streets and squares, would benefit significantly from reducing the impact of motor vehicles and maximising the ability for people to walk and wheel comfortably to visit and enjoy the area.

This is likely to support the appeal to visit and for spending increased time in a vibrant and historic setting, and should be possible to develop this while enabling vehicle access for services which continue to need this nearby.



## Issue record

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