

What do we think about Datchet?

Alison Crampin reveals some early results from the Datchet Neighbourhood Plan survey

Datchet's Neighbourhood Plan (DNP) is community-led. It offers us all the chance to have a say in Datchet's future development. That's why, in a village-wide survey, the DNP team has been asking what you like most about Datchet, what you like least, what you would change and what you would keep.

Over the past few weeks, the DNP team has been out and about in the village, trying to reach as many people as possible, from shoppers at Tesco to commuters at the railway station. We've been handing out leaflets at village events and meetings, putting up posters in shop windows, at bus stops and the railway station, and posting information on our website and Datchet Eye. An article in the previous issue of *The Link* also made sure that information about the survey was delivered to every house in the village.

We'd like to thank everyone who completed the survey. We've received more than 230 responses from the 2127 households in the village. The interim results, taken from the first few weeks of the survey, are already highlighting some clear themes and issues. Summaries of the final results will be published on our website soon.

What do you like about Datchet?

Top of the list is Datchet's community spirit, friendliness and village atmosphere. You love the beautiful open spaces such as the village greens, the recreation ground and the riverside; and the heritage and history of the Conservation Area. The pub, cafes and restaurants also get the thumbs up, as do quite a few shops, the health centre, chemist and dentists.

What do you dislike?

Perhaps not surprisingly, traffic volume and speed, together with the problems caused by the level crossings are the biggest issues. Inconsiderate parking and lack of parking spaces are also

a major concern, as are fly-tipping and litter, anti-social behaviour and crime. Aircraft noise, pollution and the third runway were also mentioned frequently.

What would you change?

Nearly half of those who responded in the first few weeks want to reduce the traffic in the village or introduce traffic-calming measures. Some suggest a bypass and others recommend changes to the level crossings. There are also calls for the Conservation Area regulations and parking rules to be more strictly enforced. A post office and bank are on your wish-list, as are more shops offering day-to-day essentials, such as a baker's, greengrocer's or butcher's. Reducing crime, improving pedestrian safety, and reducing noise and air pollution were frequently mentioned, too. Nearly one in 10 respondents said they would like it to be easier to get GP appointments.

What would you keep?

Top of the list, so far, are the village centre with its Conservation Area and Greens; the recreation ground and play area; and the pubs, cafes, restaurants and takeaways. You'd also like to safeguard the village atmosphere and community spirit, the green belt, the riverside and river views, and services such as the health centre, dentists, chemist, and library. One in 10 would like to keep the village just as it is.

What happens next?

The survey closed at the end of July and your comments are now being analysed. Your feedback will be used in the creation of Datchet's Neighbourhood Plan which will guide future development, regeneration and conservation in the village. (Issues of a non-planning nature, not covered by the DNP, will be brought to the attention of Datchet Parish Council.)

All planning policies have to be supported by evidence and a Neighbourhood Plan is no different. The survey will form part of this evidence but additional information and data will be needed. As well as researching various population, social and employment statistics, the DNP team is gathering evidence on subjects such as community facilities and infrastructure, history and heritage, the natural and built environment; commercial and retail outlets; transport; and

more. (To follow our progress, see the 'evidence' section of our website www.DatchetNeighbourhoodPlan.org)

Over the next few months, we'll be working on a 'vision' for Datchet and determining objectives for the DNP, based on your feedback. We'll be setting up 'topic groups' to consider such things as how we maintain and improve the character of Datchet; how we safeguard our environment and open spaces; how we encourage local businesses and shops; how we protect our heritage; how we meet our housing and infrastructure needs; and so on. As part of this process, we'll be asking for your thoughts on specific issues and inviting you to join workshops or come along to open days. We can then start to propose planning policies.

Why do we need a plan?

No plan doesn't mean no development, it means no control. A Neighbourhood Plan can't override the Borough Local Plan and it can't stop development in Datchet but it can allow you to have a say in that development. The aims of the DNP are to protect what we all love about Datchet, to integrate the new with the old, and to enhance village life for us all.

Datchet's Plan will have to go through a number of processes and will have to be agreed at a village-wide referendum before it can be brought into legal force. At that point, if it's successful, it will become part of the statutory development plan and applications for planning permission in the village must be determined in accordance with Datchet's Plan.

Get involved

We need your help. Do you have a couple of hours to spare each month? Would you like to join a topic group and be actively involved in Datchet's future? Do you have specialist knowledge which might be useful? If so, or if you'd just like to find out more or join our mailing list, please get in touch.

- Use the 'contact us' section of our website, www.DatchetNeighbourhoodPlan.org
- Email us at datchetnp@datchetparishcouncil.gov.uk
- Write to DNP, c/o Datchet Parish Council Offices, 1 Allen Way, Datchet SL3 9HR.
- Visit our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/DatchetNeighbourhoodPlan

What did Datchet's youngest residents say?

Datchet's Neighbourhood Plan will influence how the village develops in the next 10 or 20 years, so it can affect the sort of housing and infrastructure which will be available when today's schoolchildren become adults and have families of their own. As part of the consultation process, Datchet's schools were encouraged to get involved and do the survey. The children provided some very considered and perceptive responses.

The children of St Mary's School Council asked every pupil to complete the same survey as the adults, with the youngest children dictating their ideas to an older School Council child. Their 'Likes' included school, the recreation ground, the size and natural beauty of the village, teachers and people in the village, the church, the library, the pub, the doctors and Costa Coffee. Their 'Dislikes' were traffic, noise, new houses, traffic lights (during the roadworks), not enough play areas and no cinema. While some didn't want to change anything, others wanted to make changes to the railway crossings, introduce more CCTV cameras, reduce traffic, increase the size of the play area, cut back overgrown plants, and one suggested that there should be a place for the homeless.

A class of year 7 pupils at Churchmead School also completed the survey. They had clear likes and dislikes too. Among their 'Likes' were the shops, recreation ground, the village 'feeling', and the friendly people. When it came to what they didn't like, they voiced similar concerns to the adults, about traffic congestion, speed and pollution, and trains causing traffic jams. They were mostly united in wanting to keep the recreation ground and play areas, a fish and chip shop, Costa and the baker's but would change the village by having more shops, improving the traffic, and introducing a Subway or McDonalds.

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