



[Copy for *The Link*, December 2017 issue.]

Let's keep the character of our village!

Your responses to the recent survey are helping to shape Datchet's Neighbourhood Plan, as Alison Crampin explains

Thank you to everyone who responded to the Datchet Neighbourhood Plan (DNP) survey, telling us what you like and don't like about Datchet, what you'd keep and what you'd change. We were delighted to receive so many responses from all age groups and all areas of the village. Your comments will provide valuable evidence for Datchet's Plan.

Over the past few weeks, we've been completing an initial analysis of your feedback which we have now published on our website (www.DatchetNeighbourhoodPlan.org). This has enabled us to set out some basic principles for the Plan and outline the key topics you'd like it to cover.

You've told us that you want to keep Datchet's character as a village, so the Plan will aim to ensure that growth within the Parish is sustainable, meeting the needs of residents and businesses without compromising the heritage, friendly atmosphere and community spirit of the whole village.

Your feedback has also enabled us to draw up some preliminary guidelines which outline what you would like the DNP to do:

- To preserve and protect Datchet's attractive village greens, historic centre, and public riverside, which are key to the village's character and identity.
- To safeguard its Conservation Area and protect heritage assets throughout the village.
- To protect and enhance its green spaces, surrounding countryside and Green Belt; preserve its special views, including those across the Thames to Windsor Castle and beyond; and protect the biodiversity of the area, ensuring local people have access to nature.

- To respond to the housing needs of the community by supporting well-designed, sympathetic and sustainable development which provides suitable housing for people of all ages and means.
- To support initiatives which protect and enhance village assets, community facilities and services (including schools and healthcare, leisure and recreation) to meet residents' needs.
- To support existing local businesses and encourage new small and medium-sized businesses and shops which provide sustainable employment opportunities and enable people to shop locally.
- To identify and support appropriate infrastructure developments which reflect the community's needs and keep it an attractive, well-planned and safe place for everyone.
- To support measures which reduce traffic congestion, ensure Datchet's roads and pavements, footpaths and cycle paths provide safe and accessible routes and allow people with limited mobility, prams and wheelchairs to move more easily around the village.
- To encourage and support appropriate flood protection.

Limitations of a Neighbourhood Plan

Some of the issues you raised in the survey are beyond the remit of the DNP which has to conform to the National Planning Policy Framework and strategic policies laid out in the Royal Borough's existing Local Plan. It is also constrained by the Green Belt, the Conservation Area and the Flood Zones, and cannot influence national policies such as the proposed third runway at Heathrow and the River Thames Scheme.

Traffic congestion and roads featured regularly in your feedback, neither of which can be covered directly by a Neighbourhood Plan. But, while the DNP cannot write policies on highways, it can include evidence of problems in the existing infrastructure. It might also, for example, seek to ensure that planning applications include an analysis of the impact of development on traffic flow, where relevant, and don't exacerbate existing problems.

Other issues, such as the delays at the level crossings and lack of a Post Office, are already being tackled by Datchet Parish Council. The Council is currently responding to South West Trains' public consultation about the proposed doubling of train services through Datchet and is in discussion with the Post Office. Your comments will provide valuable evidence in both cases.

What a Neighbourhood Plan can cover is the use and development of land. If our Plan is successful at examination and referendum, it will come into force as part of the statutory local development plan and its policies will be used in the determination of planning applications.

Gathering evidence

Like any planning document, the DNP must be backed by solid evidence. While local opinion will form part of this evidence, we will also need additional information such as demographic data; a character and design assessment of the village and heritage audit; details about the condition and capacity of local infrastructure; an economic profile and business survey; and an appraisal of our community assets and green spaces. This combined evidence will allow us to define the issues and priorities for the DNP, identify constraints and opportunities, and ensure that any planning policies proposed are backed by reasoned justification.

Join a topic group

The next stage is to set up topic groups to focus on the issues you've raised, such as the built environment, the green environment, local economy and businesses, and leisure and community infrastructure. These topic groups will consider the survey responses in greater detail, research additional evidence, and hold further consultations, including walks around the village and drop-in sessions, to assess the qualities of the different areas in the village and understand the improvements needed. They will then start to draft policies for our Plan.

Could you spare a couple of hours to join us? We need volunteers to join these groups and would welcome your help. We're keen to involve local businesses and community groups as well as residents and land owners. Or can you help your community by offering your expertise? Perhaps you have specialist knowledge that might be particularly relevant? Are you, for example, an architect, planner, designer, surveyor, developer, environmental specialist, researcher, or a specialist in another relevant field?

If you've already given us your email address, we will be contacting you directly in the next few weeks with more information. If not, please send us your details so that we can add you to our mailing list.

Get in touch

- Use the 'contact us' section of our website, www.DatchetNeighbourhoodPlan.org

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- 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

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