

We're making progress!

Thanks to support from local residents, Datchet's Neighbourhood Plan is coming together well. Alison Crampin reports

Many thanks to everyone who contributed to the recent DNP survey, 'What's important to you?'. The questions were quite wide-ranging as the DNP team was looking to consolidate the evidence we have gathered to date. We asked you about Datchet's most important green spaces, our most treasured buildings, what types of new play areas are needed, which grass verges need improving, and what downsizers are looking for. Here's a run-down of what you told us.

Local Green Spaces

With your help, we identified five key sites which, we believe, meet the criteria for designation as Local Green Spaces (LGS). If designated, they will have the same protection from development as the Green Belt. To meet the requirements of national planning policy, LGS must be demonstrably special to the community for their beauty, history, recreational value, tranquillity or wildlife. They must be local in character, reasonably close to the community they serve; and not an extensive tract of land.

Respondents to the survey indicated overwhelming support for the proposed sites: 97% supported designation for the Recreation Ground; 95% the public riverside garden; 92% the Village Greens and The Cut; 84% Willowfields; and 80% the Sabatini Land between Horton Road and the Rec ditch. We also asked why these places were special to you and your feedback will be included in the supporting evidence.

Local heritage assets

We asked which local heritage assets you would like to preserve for future generations. Datchet has around 40 buildings and structures which are already Grade II Listed. These buildings are of *national* importance but a Neighbourhood Plan provides the opportunity to

create a list of heritage assets of local importance. These are also known, in planning-speak, as Non-Designated Heritage Assets (NDHAs).

Your survey responses didn't disappoint; thank you. You gave us a list of some 40 buildings which you think are locally important. Now the hard work begins. Creating a Local List requires detailed evidence to demonstrate that these buildings and structures are of value to this and future generations because of their heritage significance. This might be for architectural, historic, archaeological, or artistic reasons, for their association with important people or past events, or because they contribute positively to the character and appearance of the area.

This process will take several months so our intention, currently, is to cover some NDHAs in the Datchet Neighbourhood Plan and continue to add to a Local List with RBWM support. The List will then be assessed by an independent panel to ensure that the nominations meet the required criteria and that there has been conformity in the decision-making process.

Once a Local List is adopted by RBWM, the value to the community of these heritage assets will be taken into account, helping to inform planning decisions in a way that conserves and enhances local character and identity. Designation does not change permitted development rights but it raises the profile of an asset to developers and councils when planning applications are submitted, particularly for demolition. The Local List will also be submitted to Berkshire Archaeology which manages the Historic Environment Register and keeps a record of important local buildings.

Play areas

Our survey asked whether Datchet needs more play areas and, if so, what sort. Your input is important because if the development of a new housing site AL39 (formerly HA42, between London Road and the M4) is allowed to go ahead, there is a planning requirement to provide a public play area, and allotments on the Grade 1 agricultural land.

Both this survey and last year's Open Spaces survey highlight a demand for a separate play area for toddlers and very young children, to complement the provision at the Recreation Ground and to promote early-years development and learning. There was also support for a

garden of some sort, such as a community garden or allotments for growing food, or a sensory/flower/wildlife garden with seating areas, as well as support for enhancing and expanding leisure and exercise facilities both indoor and outdoor, for the health and wellbeing of all age groups, at the Recreation Ground or other suitable sites in the village.

Verges

Generous grass verges are a key characteristic of Datchet. A Neighbourhood Plan can request that new development includes roadside verges and that these are designed to discourage parking on them. From the DNP Character Assessment walks with residents and the recent survey, we have been able to identify several verges in need of improvements.

Downsizing

Our evidence-gathering highlighted a potential need for more downsizing properties. Datchet has a sizable proportion of single people and couples living in large family houses. Some would like to move somewhere smaller, or 'downsize', but struggle to find anywhere suitable. If such properties were available, it might free up family houses which are most in demand. Your feedback in the survey and contributions to an online focus group have helped the DNP team to understand more about the types of property which downsizers are looking for. If there is supporting evidence, the DNP can request the provision of housing suitable for downsizing in new, large-scale development in the village, such as at AL39.

Datchet Design Guide

By the time you read this, the Datchet Design Guide should have gone before RBWM's full council. We hope it will have been adopted. It was prepared by the DNP team working alongside a professional town planner and RBWM's planning officers to help ensure that any new development in Datchet is visually attractive and sympathetic to local character and history, and maintains a strong sense of place. Feedback to last year's consultation was generally very positive and your comments helped to improve it further.

Further information

The results of this and other DNP surveys are published at

www.datchetneighbourhoodplan.org

There are also Character Assessments which cover the whole of Datchet. If you have anything to add to these assessments, please let us know:

www.datchetneighbourhoodplan.org/character-assessments.html

ENDS

Logo and photos:



Caption: 95% of survey respondents thought the riverside should be protected

Credit: Photograph: Adrian Giddins/Datchet Village Society



Caption: Datchet residents recommended dozens of buildings for a local heritage list

