

The Link. Summer 2022 issue.

Datchet Neighbourhood Plan copy - final

12 May 2022

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

Your contributions to the recent Datchet Neighbourhood Plan consultation will help to guide future development in the village, as Alison Crampin explains

A Neighbourhood Plan provides an opportunity for us to have more influence over the development process in our area, by addressing the challenges that face the community and helping to ensure that growth is sustainable and meets local needs without compromising the natural and historic environment, friendly atmosphere and community spirit of the whole village. It can also benefit the village financially as areas with a Neighbourhood Plan receive a greater share of the funds which developers pay to support local infrastructure.

Over recent years, the Datchet Neighbourhood Plan team has been working with local people to write a set of planning policies for Datchet, backed by supporting evidence, which address the issues you've raised. This is particularly important now that, as laid out in the Queen's Speech in May, the government is seeking to overhaul the planning system and devolve more decision-making to local communities.

Public consultation

The Datchet Neighbourhood Plan (DNP) was published on 21 March 2022 for the Regulation 14 public consultation, giving everyone an opportunity to comment on the proposed policies, say how we'd like our area to develop in the next decade, and suggest ways that the Plan could be improved. Thank you to everyone who attended the drop-in sessions and

to those who responded to the consultation which closed at midnight on 15 May. We appreciate your taking the time to write in and comment.

All your written responses on a range of topics including character and heritage, housing, the environment, flooding and drainage, sustainable design, community assets and key movement routes, are now being considered and the DNP team is taking advice from a professional planner on how to modify the plan accordingly. Some changes may be straightforward while others may be beyond the scope of a neighbourhood plan or may contradict existing national or local planning policy. In some cases, different representations may take opposing views, in which case a planning judgement will need to be taken. All these decisions will be recorded in a formal Consultation Statement.

The resulting Plan will then be presented to Datchet Parish Council for ratification and submission to RBWM Council. It will be accompanied by the Consultation Statement and a raft of supplementary documents providing evidence to support the plan and to demonstrate that there has been a rigorous programme of community and stakeholder engagement throughout the process.

Second consultation

The responsibility for the following stage lies with RBWM. They must check that the proper process has been followed and that the submitted Plan complies with all the relevant legislation. If RBWM finds that the Plan meets the legal requirements, it will publicise the proposed Plan for a minimum of six weeks - known as the Regulation 16 consultation - and invite representations (comments) in writing. It will also notify all the consultation bodies referred to in the Consultation Statement and appoint an independent examiner.

At the Regulation 16 public consultation, you may again comment on the Plan, and RBWM will pass on these comments to the independent examiner, but the examiner can only consider comments which fall within their remit to determine whether the draft plan meets the 'basic conditions' with regard to legal requirements, conformity with national and local policy, sustainable development, etc.

Regulation 18

It is not unusual for examiners to recommend that modifications are made before a Plan can proceed to a public referendum. These modifications must also be discussed with the Neighbourhood Plan team. At this stage, there is an option to withdraw the plan. If the examiner's recommendations are agreed by RBWM at cabinet, they will publish details of the modifications and where they can be inspected on their website. This is known as Regulation 18 publicity.

Village-wide referendum

RBWM will then arrange for a referendum to take place. The date of the referendum will be publicised widely and, if you are on the electoral register, you will have the opportunity to cast your vote on whether or not you would like RBWM to use the DNP to help it decide planning applications in our neighbourhood area.

If more than 50 per cent of those voting in the referendum vote 'yes', then the DNP becomes part of the statutory Local Development Plan for the area and its policies must be used when making planning decisions.

The Plan's content should then be reviewed each year at the Annual Parish Meeting each April. This is the meeting of the parish electors at which Datchet Parish Council can report what it has accomplished during the preceding year. As circumstances change, it may become necessary or desirable to review or update the contents of the DNP. There are set procedures to follow in order to do this.

Financial benefit

If the DNP is successful at referendum, it will not only allow the community to have a greater say in the way our area develops, it will also result in increased funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This is the money which developers contribute towards local infrastructure to support a development. The proportion of CIL money Datchet Parish Council receives directly is currently 15%. With a Neighbourhood Plan, this will rise to 25%, representing a 66% uplift in CIL funds to spend locally.

Timescale

The neighbourhood planning process is lengthy and time-consuming but it serves to ensure that the plan has been properly created and is supported by the community. We are unable to provide a timescale yet for the various consultations but, in the meantime, we would like to thank you for your support and the contributions you have made over the past few years to help get the Plan to this stage. As information becomes available, we will share it with you on our website and, with the editor's kind permission, in future articles in this magazine.

For more information, please visit www.datchetneighbourhoodplan.org

Ends



Caption: Pages from the Datchet Neighbourhood Plan

