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Tell us what you think!

Join Datchet's Neighbourhood Plan team for a Character Assessment walk in your area, says Alison Crampin, and tell us what works well and what needs improvement

As this issue of *The Link* goes to press, Datchet's Neighbourhood Plan team will be completing its first series of Character Assessment walks, in Slough Road, Eton Road and the Conservation Area (village centre), and starting on the second series in Ditton Road, London Road and Horton Road. There are two walks in each area, on a weekend afternoon and a midweek evening, so that as many people as possible can join us.

Taking stock

These Character Assessment walks are an opportunity to take stock of what we have in the village and to hear what you think works well in your street and what could be improved.

Each walk starts by looking at the overall setting, considering whether an area is in the flood zone, Green Belt or Conservation Area, and noting how the land is used; is it residential, commercial, leisure or community? As we walk along, we look closely at the buildings, noting the materials used and recording details of the construction era and architectural style. We look at the height, width and arrangement of the buildings. Are they detached, semi-detached, terraced? Bungalows, houses, apartments? Have they been changed or extended over time?

We also look at the elements which combine to create the 'streetscape'. For example, the lamp posts and lighting, benches and seating, pavement- and street-surfacing materials and their

condition, road markings, signposts, boundary treatments (walls, fences, hedges, open-plan), trees and verges.

We make a note of footpaths and cycle paths and ask how easy it is to get around. Are the footpaths adequate? Are there lowered kerbs for wheelchairs and prams? Is it difficult to cross the road? Are paths well-lit? Are there particular issues, such as congestion, speeding traffic, or cars taking short-cuts? Are there enough parking spaces, or problems with inconsiderate or commuter parking? It's vital for us to hear residents' views on local issues; you are the people who know your area best.

We record details of important natural features such as green spaces, trees and hedgerows, streams, woodland, landscaped areas, and note whether they are well maintained. Views are important too, so we record any special views in and out of the character area, for example views from the riverside, of the church, or of the village centre, which you would like to see protected.

We finish each walk by summarising the key defining characteristics of an area and discussing what works well, what is inappropriate, and what could be improved.

Gathering evidence

The information we gather in these Character Assessments will form part of the evidence for Datchet's Neighbourhood Plan, supporting and informing its policies. For example, in the recent survey, you told us that it was important for Datchet to retain its character as a village. These Assessments are a record of what defines that special character. They are a factual description of our neighbourhood areas, with comments on the most valued and important characteristics. This information will help us to propose policies in Datchet's Neighbourhood Plan which support the conservation and enhancement of this local character so that that any new development can be sensitively designed. If some areas are identified as being in need of upgrading or redevelopment, our Plan could include policies which set out criteria for positive change in these areas. It could also consider whether there are any green or open spaces which could be enhanced; any pedestrian or cycle routes which could be improved or added to, and it could also provide additional protection for the Conservation Area.

Join us

The people who live or work in an area are the ones who know it best, and your local knowledge, about how your area has developed and particular issues in your neighbourhood, will contribute greatly to Datchet's Neighbourhood Plan.

The next series of walks will cover:

- **Ditton Road:** Saturday 9 June at 2pm and Thursday 14 June at 7pm, starting from Tesco.
- **London Road:** Saturday 23 June at 2pm and Wednesday 27 June at 7pm, starting from The Royal Stag.
- **Horton Road:** Sunday 15 July at 2pm and Wednesday 18 July at 7pm, starting from Datchet Parish Council's offices on the Recreation Ground.

If you live on one of these roads, please look out for a leaflet coming through your letterbox with more information. Details are also posted online, on the DNP website and Facebook page (www.datchetneighbourhoodplan.org and www.facebook.com/datchetneighbourhoodplan), and on Datchet Eye. Or you can pick up a leaflet at The Bridge, The Royal Stag or Datchet Library. We can also be contacted c/o Datchet Parish Council, 1 Allen Way, Datchet SL3 9HR.

Thank you to everyone who has already joined us for one of these walks – we very much appreciate your help and support – and we look forward to seeing more people who live or work in the village over the coming weeks. Please also come along and see us at our stand at Datchet Village fete on 7 July.

Ends.



Caption: If you live in one of the roads which is being assessed, please look out for a leaflet through your letterbox

