

NAME OF SITE	Datchet Recreation Ground
Proposed designation	Local Green Space
Address or location	Green Lane, Datchet SL3 9HR
Map reference	2
Details of any existing designation (green belt, conservation area, Local Wildlife Site, planning permission, etc)	Flood plain - Flood Zone 3.
Ownership	Datchet Parish Council

Details and reasons for protection

1. Brief description of the space and details of its purpose

The Recreation Ground, or 'Rec', is the largest green space in the heart of the village and an important public leisure amenity. It has great recreational value for the community, with children's and young people's play areas; sports equipment, facilities and pitches; and cultivated grassland. It is also used by dog-walkers. It is separated from the Sabatini Land by a ditch which runs along its length.

2. Is the space close or relatively close to the community it serves? Is site easily accessible to the public? If not, does it provide amenity value without public access?

It is very close to the centre of the village, surrounded on all sides by residential housing. The majority of the village falls within 710m of the Rec, the 'Fields in Trust' accessibility standard for public parks and gardens and the 1km standard for a NEAP (Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play). It is a greater distance for residents living at the edges of the parish.

There is pedestrian access from multiple points on all sides of the Recreation Ground although crossing the busy Horton Road can be difficult.

Access points:

- In the south-western corner, there is a footbridge (with steps) over the railway line from Montagu Road and the south-west of the village. This is a short cut to the Recreation Ground and parish council office, village hall, health centre, etc. In the Character Assessments, residents commented that the steep steps make this bridge difficult for anyone with mobility problems, or with children and prams. It is also poorly lit.
- In the south-eastern corner, there is a short-cut walking route via the Willowfields to Mill Place Caravan Park, a traveller site. There is also a pedestrian entrance from Holmlea Walk.
- From Green Lane, there are entrances on both sides of Datchet Health Centre, an entrance midway along the ha-ha, and another at the south end of Green Lane near the scout hut and nursery.
- There is a footbridge across the railway line which links Montagu Road to Green Lane and the Recreation Ground.
- There is an entrance from Allen Way via a small footbridge/road bridge over the ditch.
- From Horton Road, from the west, the Rec can be accessed via the Sabatini Land and a footbridge across the ditch. From the eastern end, near Tesco, a footpath leads from Horton Road directly to the Recreation Ground.

Traffic: The Rec lies off Horton Road, a major traffic route through the village. In DNP consultations, residents have complained about the lack of safe crossing points along this busy road and have said they do not feel confident to allow their children to cross this road alone. The traffic makes pedestrian access from North Datchet to the Recreation Ground, primary school, health centre and other sites on the south side of Horton Road, more difficult.

The route to the Recreation Ground from the proposed new development site on London Road AL39 (formerly HA42) involves crossing two main roads, London Road and then Horton Road. These two roads are linked by Lawn Close (unadopted) and Link Road.

Footpaths and cycle paths: There is a shared footpath/cyclepath on the Sabatini Land and a footpath across the Rec, beside the ditch. These can be used as traffic-free routes to school and to the village centre and its facilities. The cycle path does not link well with other local cycle paths.

Parking: There is no bicycle parking at the Rec. Horton Road car park is nearby and there is some parking for cars around Allen Way. In the character assessment, residents said that Link Road is also used for parking by visitors to the Rec. There are no yellow lines on Horton Road but it is a busy route and cars generally do not park there.

Wheelchair access: The footpath across the recreation ground is flat and tarmacked. It runs alongside the ditch, next to the play areas, gym and sports' courts. Access to this path from the east and west is step-free. Residents have suggested that the dropped curbs could be improved to help cross this road in a wheelchair or with a pram.

3. Is it local in character and not too extensive in area?

The land is local in character being low, open, floodplain. It is mainly-cultivated grassland, bordered on two sides by trees and hedging; there is a ha-ha planted with trees and shrubs at its boundary with Green Lane; and a ditch along its boundary with the tree-lined Sabatini Land. This ditch links the culverted stream and drainage channel from the village centre to the Linchfield Brook and Datchet Common Brook. The site is 6.365 hectares which provides space for the wide range of formal and informal recreation activities, such as football and tennis, see point 6, below.

4. Is it noted for its beauty and/or tranquility? Are there significant views into, out of, across the site?

It is a very attractive green space beside one of the key movement routes to the village centre, Horton Road. Trees and greenery planted around the perimeter and in private gardens soften the impact of the surrounding built environment and create a green skyline, most notably along the railway boundary. The expanse of open grassland is green and pleasant all year round.

Even when the play areas and facilities are relatively busy, the area is large enough for residents to find space for a quiet walk or a bench for quiet contemplation although the silence is broken by aircraft flying overhead. From the border with Holmlea Walk, there are glimpses of Windsor Castle. St Mary's Church steeple can also be seen from several viewpoints. There are good views of the setting sun and night sky.

5. Does it have historic significance?

Historically this area was farmland, known as Marsh Field, with a stream running through it from the centre of the village (see 1833 Enclosure Map). It has never been built on.

Princess Margaret opened the Recreation Ground in 1951.

Metal detectorists have found lead musket balls here.

6. Does it have recreational value for the local community?

The Rec is classed by RBWM as a NEAP (Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play) for play and informal recreation with provision for children and young people. It is rated good.

There is a junior play area, SPAR, for the under 10s and a senior play area, TYPODRA, for 10s and over.

Both are surrounded by railings with entrance gates. TYPODRA has recently undergone an extensive refurbishment programme including the addition of a new Nexus Altitude unit. There are small tables and benches and other items of play equipment in the grass area between these two sites. This play equipment includes The Viper - a large rope swing; The Titan – a carousel unit; The Freerider – a grip and glide unit. There is also an electronic activity unit, The iPlay. The Recreation Ground does not open directly onto any roads which makes it a safer place for children to play.

Sports facilities include two tennis courts, basketball court, and a Green Gym, all provided by the parish council and a local trust. There are also two full-size football pitches with changing rooms in the Village Hall complex. These are used by Datchet Football Club on Saturdays and Sundays from August until May (plus friendly matches in July). There are four adult sides and a youth team.

The space, which has some benches along its border with Green Lane, is also used for general exercise and is popular with dog-walkers. Large village events are sometimes held here as an alternative to The Green, including Royal Wedding celebrations in 2018. Recently there was interest in organising a 5km Park Run.

During the lockdown due to the pandemic, the Recreation Ground has been used more than ever (although the play equipment and green gym were off-limits).

7. Does it have ecological value?

Local group Wild About Datchet has done surveys of the numerous species of wildflowers which grow along the ditch as well as bird and butterfly surveys on the adjoining land. The Recreation Ground links to

other green spaces at The Willowfields, Land at Mill Place and Local Wildlife Sites, and forms part of the green corridor along the railway line.

8. Additional details of the quality or deficiencies of the space, if relevant. Is it sufficient for current and future needs?

- The Recreation Ground is an attractive area of cultivated grassland, bordered by trees, shrubs and a watercourse, which is close to the majority of the community.
- It is generally clean and well-maintained.
- It is not in the Green Belt but it forms a green break between the eastern and western built-up settlements in Datchet. (The RBWM Green Belt Boundary Studies in 2009 and 2013 both proposed adding the Rec to the Green Belt.) It links with existing green belt land at The Willowfields and The Land at Mill Place. (The Willowfields, a parcel of mixed shrub and woodland at the south-eastern corner of the Rec has been allowed to develop as a wild grassy area. Beyond it, The Land at Mill Place is an area of rough grass and shrub used by dog-walkers and as a short cut from Mill Place caravan site to the 'Rec' and village centre.)
- It has an important function as a large area of floodplain and is a welcome green space away from the traffic.
- The majority of the village is within the 'public park and garden 710m accessibility catchment area' of the Recreation Ground.
- Pedestrian crossing points on Horton Road to the Recreation Ground could be improved. This would be particularly beneficial as a large section of the community lives to the north of Horton Road and it is also a key movement route and a route to school.
- The Rec is not well served by public transport.
- There is no signage to the Recreation Ground. On the Recreation Ground itself, the signage is clear about what is and isn't allowed.
- Bicycle parking could be provided. In feedback and surveys, residents have requested more bicycle parking. This is also recommended in RBWM's Cycle Action Plan to promote cycling within the Borough.
- There is potential to consider additional planting to increase biodiversity, also more trees to provide shade, help disperse flood water and increase carbon capture.
- While there is provision on the site for children and young people, active adult residents and dog walkers, there is also potential to consider whether the facilities meet the needs of senior residents or those with disabilities or special needs.
- The Green Gym includes a piece of equipment which can be used by people in wheelchairs.
- There is space to consider the provision of additional facilities in the future. In a DNP Open Spaces survey, residents proposed diverse ideas (bowling green, putting green, rose garden, community garden, young children's sensory gardens, splash park, peace garden, oval cycle track, nature trail, sculpture trail, skateboard park, more benches and trees for shade, etc).
- The RBWM Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan says that improving pitch quality to good at Datchet Recreation Ground would eliminate overplay and highlights that currently only one set of changing rooms serves both pitches. Datchet Football Club has also noted that the changing facilities are out of date, lack space, and would benefit from an upgrade.

9. Is the site demonstrably special to local people, e.g. comments, photographs, surveys etc

The Rec is very well used (see above) and widely appreciated and commented on in DNP Surveys (comments below). Photographs taken from the Rec of the setting sun and evening sky, and of the church spire, are often posted on local social media. In the DNP's interviews with local estate agents, the Rec was singled out as an important draw for prospective buyers.

10. Summary and recommendations

In summary, the Recreation Ground fulfils the requirements of the NPPF paragraph 100 for Local Green Space designation. It is close to the community it serves and is an easily identified tract of land. It is demonstrably special to the community and a much-valued part of Datchet. It holds particular local significance for its recreational value.

Recommendations include:

- Designate the Recreation Ground as a Local Green Space.
- Improve and make safer the crossing points across the busy Horton Road to the Recreation Ground.

- Provide secure bicycle parking to encourage visitors to leave cars at home and reduce parking in nearby streets.
- Add planting to improve biodiversity and assist drainage, possibly as part of Datchet Parish Council's plans to plant 125 trees for their 125th anniversary.
- Consult with residents about adding to the existing facilities to ensure all age groups and abilities and a wide range of interests are catered for.
- Improve public transport access to the Recreation Ground.
- As a separate project, consider provision for residents who live more than 710m away from the Recreation Ground.

Comments from local people

The following comments from the DNP Open Spaces and Village-wide Surveys, give a flavour of the general views: 'Our recreation ground and river banks are lovely.' 'The Recreation Ground is a great asset.' 'The recreation ground is both accessible and a high specification - it is superb also central.' 'I love the historic village centre and the pretty village greens and other green spaces such as The Cut and the Rec. The beautiful trees.' 'Datchet is perfect for families with excellent parks on the recreation field. The new park additions in recent years are wonderful and adored by our children and their friends.' 'The recreation ground is very good and well-kept too.' 'I like the open space of the rec.' 'Beautiful village centre, beautiful green spaces, great recreation grounds.'

In the 'What's important to you' survey, 97% of respondents supported the designation of the Recreation Ground as a Local Green Space. Residents were asked which green spaces were special to them and why. The following comments were made:

- Recreation Ground because it is multi-use.
- Recreation Ground – it's an area for village residents to exercise/play sport and children to play
- Datchet Rec for sports and recreation for family and football.
- Recreation ground. Biggest open space in Datchet. Been using it all my life as a child and now adult.
- The Rec as it's vulnerable to being built on but is a flood alleviation plain. It might be come at risk in future years from being built on if/after RTS channel 1 is built.
- The rec - so special to have such an open space & helps to make Datchet a special place to live
- Rec because of the recreational facilities
- The recreation ground is a great spot for the kids to have fun.
- The recreation ground and Sabatini ground as my children play there and it's a safe route to walk to school
- The rec and adjacent grounds for recreation
- Recreation ground. It's so important to have an open space for everyone to enjoy.
- Recreation ground as it is used by so many for all types of exercise
- The recreation ground - it's great except for when the kids are zooming around on their quad bikes. I thought it was illegal
- Recreation ground. My children love going there

The DNP team asked Andrew Clemens, Vice Chairman and Secretary of Datchet Football Club, Chairman and Secretary of Datchet Youth Football Club, and a parish councillor, to comment on the provision for football at the Rec:

- The current Datchet Village Football Club was formed in 1986 by Jamie Doran (Club President) and Paul Skelly (Chairman). It was recently renamed after acquiring the original Datchet Football Club name.
- DFC has matches at home virtually every Saturday and Sunday from August until May (about 44 weeks) plus friendly matches in July, so the pitches are in constant use. There are four adult sides (16+) and a youth team (under 13s) on a Sunday. The adult club has around 90 players plus staff; the youth team has around 20 players plus staff. Many of those involved are current or former residents but we also attract a lot of people from outside too. We have a good number of local supporters and sponsors. It is very much a community club; more than 150 supporters attended the first youth team match in October 2020.

- One of the biggest attractions for players over the years are the Recreation Ground pitches, as they are well respected within the football community as being one of the best playing surfaces in the local area. We have received compliments from semi-pro sides in the past who have said that our pitches are better than actual ground/stadium pitches they have played on. We are very lucky that Datchet Parish Council has looked after the pitches over the years, especially the former groundsman who was always very supportive of the club. The club wishes to enhance these going forward, if possible, as we are immensely proud of what we play on and are fundraising to do so.
- Going forward, we are also looking to use the Rec for training purposes (if we get the funding to be able to do so). By doing so, we hope to make the club and the recreation ground even more appealing to local residents and especially children as they are the future of our club. We are also looking into whether we can start women's and girls' football teams plus adding a vets team for those who are older and less fit to keep people involved.
- **Recommendations:** The club has access to on-site changing facilities and is allowed access to the parish yard for equipment purposes including the goals. To make the club better, we do need a facilities update in the changing rooms as they are very out of date, plus we would like for them to be expanded so that more teams can be accommodated. Currently, if we have two matches at home on the same day, two teams have to share one changing room, which isn't ideal as 30+ people are squeezed into a small space. There is nowhere separate for women to change and the 'referee's room' is a small box room that we also use for storage. To progress higher up the leagues, we would need these to be addressed. We also would like to have some form of club house at the Rec for players and supporters to use on match day as we feel this would attract more people to come watch or get involved with the club.

Supporting photographs:



The Recreation Ground was opened by Princess Margaret in 1951







Map and aerial view



The aerial view of the area, above, shows the extent of the space within the village settlement. The map below indicates the different sites making up the whole.

