

NAME OF SITE	Datchet Riverside
Proposed designation	Local Green Space
Address or location	Windsor Road
Map reference	6
Details of any existing designation (green belt, conservation area, Local Wildlife Site, planning permission, etc)	Green Belt, Conservation Area
Ownership	Datchet Parish Council. The western edge is leased by the DPC from RBWM.

Details and reasons for protection
1. Brief description of the space and details of its purpose
<p>Datchet Riverside is adjacent to the Windsor Road, B3021, where the road swings close to the NE bank of the River Thames. It is a small area (about 0.17 ha) of grass and trees which lies away from the village centre and sits between the privately-owned, fenced off river gardens and a busy boatyard. Due to extensive ownership of the riverbanks, mainly by the Crown Estate, it is the only place in Datchet where the public have free access to the river and where the views are open and extensive. This gives it special status.</p> <p>The riverside has recently been refurbished to create an attractive park with benches looking out over the river and a picnic area. Consequently it is very popular as a place where people go to sit, sunbathe, picnic and generally enjoy the views. In addition it is used by fishermen, kayakers and walkers from the Thames path, as well as parents and toddlers who go to 'feed the ducks'.</p> <p>There is free mooring for shallow draught boats for up to 24 hours.</p>
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?
<p>The Riverside is within a 5 minute walk of the centre of the village and no more than 15mins away from most of the rest of the village. There is very limited parking so it is largely reached on foot.</p> <p>The only difficulty with access is that the High St, Windsor Rd and Southlea Road have to be crossed and this is sometimes a hazard in busy traffic. In addition Windsor Road and Southlea Road only have footpaths on the north side of the road.</p>
3. Is it local in character and not too extensive in area?
<p>The Riverside is quintessentially Thames-side village in character, from the red-brick heritage houses which face it to the long boats moored in the river. Fortunately Datchet has kept the original trees and replaced the grass, in keeping with historic times. The length of the Riverside is about 90m.</p>
4. Is it noted for its beauty and/or tranquillity? Are there significant views into, out of, across the site?
<p>Named by one of Datchet's residents as the "jewel in Datchet's Crown" the Riverside is a well-known beauty-spot which has stunning views across the river. This is particularly the case when the evening sun is low and the sunset is reflected in the sparkling water. It has inspired many paintings and photographs (see attachment)</p> <p>According to the Conservation Area statement 'The views...across to the expansive Home Park and along the River Thames have important historic and aesthetic merits. This view has little altered from the early 17th century when it was the public route across from Datchet to Windsor and glimpses of this tree-lined route can still be seen.....The views of home park and Windsor castle beyond are enjoyed from this space'. Although adjacent to the busy Windsor Road, the trees and the sloping terrain form a barrier to the traffic noise and tranquillity is one of the qualities appreciated by the local community.</p>

5. Does it have historic significance?

The Riverbank has historic significance due to its proximity to the river crossing to Windsor Castle. (There is a plaque to commemorate this near the fence with the boatyard.) Until 1850, the Riverfront was a muddy bank near the Datchet Bridge, which was the main route to Windsor. A section of it was 'parish land.'

The area as we know it today was created in 1865 by a local trust, the Barker Bridge House Trust, as a landing place for small boats and a small public park and river access. At this point the wall was built, the land levelled and the grass and trees planted. The public area was smaller than it is today as there was still a boat-building business in the west and in the east an area for small boats and punt hire. Traditionally the site has been used for mooring small boats (at one time, only residents' boats were permitted).

In the 20th century the boat building business disappeared and the public park has been enlarged by the leasing of Borough land in the west. The boatyard to the east has expanded to become a large modern motor-boat hire and boat mooring business.

Two small, narrow wood and metal pole jetties were removed in recent times because they had become dilapidated and unsafe. Proposals to extend and replace them in 2012 caused controversy in the local community but since then the river wall has been refurbished and the new mooring rings provided mean that shallow-draught boats are still very much part of the Riverside activity without detracting from the space and views so enjoyed by the residents.

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

DNP surveys have indicated that The Riverside is one of the most valued green spaces in Datchet. The local community recognises that its recreational value is not in the playing of games and exercising, because the terrain and position are unsuitable, but in relaxation, sun-bathing, picnicking, sitting in quiet contemplation or meditation and enjoying the bucolic views, combined with fishing, kayaking, paddle-boarding and occasionally swimming. Access to the river, which is quite shallow near the bank, is facilitated by the use of a slipway which was built some years ago for use by the emergency services, but is no longer required for these purposes.

Residents who wish to hire boats can do so from the neighbouring boatyard. The mooring facilities are of value to boat owners, but most of these are not from the local community. Similarly it is very much appreciated as a rest point along the way for the thousands of walkers who traverse the Thames Path, which follows the B3021 at this point.

The Riverside has recreational value for the local community in many ways and, as a small area, it could easily become overwhelmed. However at present the integrity of the space is maintained because no one pursuit dominates the others or requires permanent equipment or storage facilities. As a result when the visitors have gone home, the views are not compromised and the tranquillity remains.

7. Does it have ecological value?

The Riverside provides a habitat for varieties of wild fowl and a pair of swans, which used to nest here until floodwaters removed the small mud bank nesting area, regard it as their territory and use the paths and slipway for preening and raising their young.

However apart from observing the wild fowl, and the birds and insects which habitually live in the trees, an ecological survey has not been carried out to provide evidence that the Riverside is of special ecological value. Of course this could change and with proper direction there is potential for improving the habitat for wildlife.

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

The Riverside was refurbished by RBWM, the Barker Bridge House Trust and Datchet Parish Council in 2015/6. The river wall was rebuilt and a beautiful York stone towpath set down. All the benches were replaced, the grass was re-turfed and new posts and chains set along the roadside, with lighting. Not everything was successful, e.g. the lights look out of place and the measures taken to deter the geese from eating the grass are only partially effective, but the general outcome is of a very high quality public space. The increased usage of the site by the public, especially during good weather, bears testimony to this. The

site was particularly popular during the Covid lock-down period, when it was a haven for people without gardens or private outside space.

For the current and future needs it is a question of containment. The space is already small and any attempts to encroach on this valuable community asset should be resisted. Similarly it is important to retain easy access to the river for small non-powered craft, such as kayaks and paddle-boards, which are in keeping with the scale of the site.

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

The fact that the Riverside is the only public access point to the River Thames gives this small green space unique status in Datchet. Local people are very aware of this special quality and a proposal in 2012/3, later withdrawn, to erect three large new jetties to accommodate deep-draught large modern vessels and a mooring point for commercial ferries, caused controversy throughout the village.

More recently, when the refurbishment was finished, local people posted very positive comments and photographs on the local Facebook page and regularly post their latest photographs of the site. *See below.* In addition, the local group, Datchet Village Society regularly publishes appreciative articles on the Riverside and takes a deep interest in this part of the Conservation Area. A history of the Riverside can be read on the Datchet History website.

10. Summary and recommendations

In summary, the Riverside fulfils the requirements of the NPPF paragraph 100 for Local Green Space designation. It is close to the community it serves and is a small easily identified tract of land. It is demonstrably special to the local community and has a unique setting which allows public access to a place of stunning views, beauty and tranquillity where they can enjoy quiet, restful recreation. It is of historic significance to the village and is the only part of Datchet where the scenery of the River Thames can be enjoyed by the public.

Therefore the DNPSG recommend that:

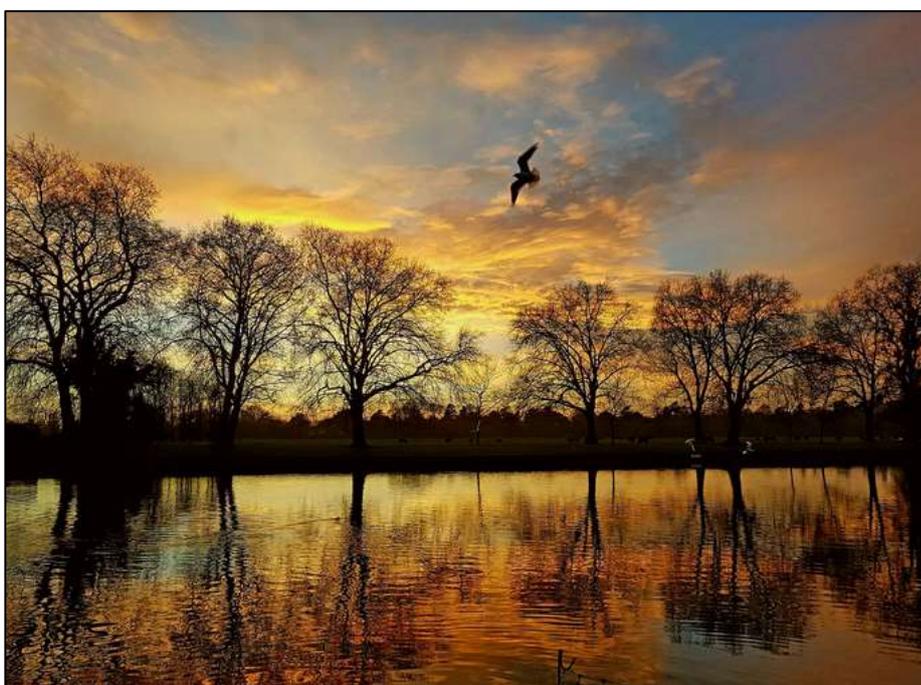
- The Riverside should be designated as a Local Green Space in order to give more security so that the views, ambience and tranquillity can be preserved for the future.
- The open space is secured as a special area of riverside to be enjoyed by residents.
- The lighting should be changed so that it is less intrusive.
- A plan is created for succession planting to gradually replace the diseased chestnut trees.
- An ecological survey is carried out and a plan created to increase bio-diversity

Comments from local people The following quotes are taken from the Datchet Neighbourhood Plan village-wide survey in which residents were asked what they liked and disliked about Datchet, what they would keep and what they would change:

'Great river view.' 'Stunning views of the river from the riverfront.' 'I like the beautiful village centre, the countryside, the river.' 'I like our precious slice of public riverside with its beautiful views and the lovely walks along the river.' 'I'd like to keep the riverside as it is for the community to enjoy.' 'I like the river and its wildlife, and the unrestricted view of the river.' Beautiful riverside location that is unspoilt, with no commercial boats.'

'I like the picturesque centre of the village and the river.' 'I like the amenity of the riverside.' 'I like Datchet's location by the river and beautiful parts of the Great Park.' 'Pretty riverfront.' 'Stunning setting by the River Thames. Surrounded by lush green Royal Parks.' 'I'd keep the riverside as it is without the jetties as the current mooring rings are quite adequate.' 'Our riverbanks are lovely.' 'I would keep the riverfront just as it is – it looks lovely after its up-grade.' 'I like the seating areas by the river.' 'I'd like to see the riverfront extended if the opportunity arose.' 'Beautiful riverfront.' 'I'd keep the riverfront and its views.' 'Too much of the river is screened off by private river gardens – can't Datchet try to acquire one or two of them to expand our publicly-accessible river frontage and give a beautiful view and public facility.'

Photographs courtesy of Datchet Village Society Photo Archive





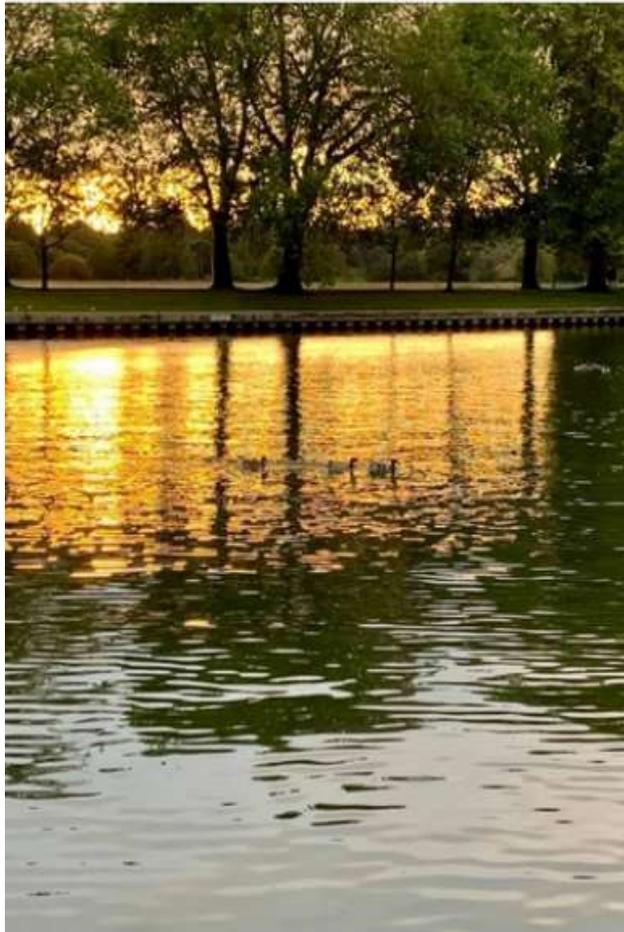


From Datchet Eye Facebook page – 258 likes

 chet. ⋮

27 September at 19:16 · 🌐

Datchet looking beautiful in the sunset tonight.



   258 10 comments

 Love  Comment

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 That's is stunning!!!   