



## A summary of the 2017 survey responses by topic

### OUR VISION: TO RETAIN DATCHET'S CHARACTER AS A VILLAGE

Our vision, based on feedback from the village-wide survey, is to retain Datchet's character as a village. The Datchet Neighbourhood Plan aims to ensure that growth in the Parish is sustainable, meeting the needs of residents and businesses without compromising the character, heritage, friendly atmosphere and community spirit of the whole village.

The DNP Steering Group also drew up some guidelines for the Datchet Neighbourhood Plan based on your feedback. These are included in bold text below, under each topic heading. They are followed by a summary of the types of comments we received on each topic.

#### **BUILT/GREEN ENVIRONMENT**

- **To preserve and protect Datchet's attractive village greens, historic centre, and public riverside, which are key to the village's character and identity.**
- **To safeguard its Conservation Area and protect heritage assets throughout the village.**

More than anything else, respondents commented on the community spirit, friendliness, the village atmosphere, and attractiveness of the village. The 'heart' of the village is important. This is most usually defined as the Conservation Area, Recreation Ground and Riverside. The village is not overly built-up or merging with other locations because it is bordered by the Thames, M4, reservoir and Crown Land. Many felt that this helps to retain Datchet's 'village feel'. Hardly anyone referred to Datchet as a town.

Residents appreciate the historic centre/Conservation Area, the village greens and riverside location. A good number want to see improved protection for the Conservation Area and heritage buildings throughout the village. Suggestions included increasing the number of buildings recognised for their design or historic importance, and protecting trees and areas of special interest so they are not lost or damaged by development. There were calls for more thought to go into granting planning consent and for tighter planning enforcement. Some wanted areas of the Conservation Area to be tidied up, such as the churchyard and the old MG garage (which falls just outside the boundary). There were also suggestions for improving street lighting and street furniture in the Conservation Area and for putting up noticeboards with interesting facts about the village to celebrate the buildings, culture and history of the village.

There were calls for more thought to go into granting planning consent and for tighter planning enforcement generally so that the village's heritage is preserved for future generations. There were suggestions that guidelines could be drawn up, particularly for shops in the Conservation Area, so that the premises have a more consistent look and feel, 'in keeping with the village theme'. Others wanted to see an end to neon signs in shops and felt that some shop fascias were not in keeping with rest of the CA.

## GREEN ENVIRONMENT

- **To protect and enhance its green spaces, surrounding countryside and Green Belt; preserve its special views, including those across the Thames to Windsor Castle and beyond; and protect the biodiversity of the area, ensuring local people have access to nature.**

There were many comments relating to the green environment, such as requests for better use of, and improved protection for, our green spaces; requests to improve tree management and tidy our green spaces, and to consider the types of facilities available at the Rec. Noise and air pollution were also concerns, as well as littering and dog fouling, and fly-tipping.

Respondents want to ensure that our green spaces, particularly the village greens, Recreation Ground and facilities, and the riverside are protected. They also like the green belt and open space surrounding the village. The value of the green belt as flood plain (soak away for flood relief) was also highlighted.

There were some suggestions for making changes to the Thames Path between Datchet and Victoria Bridge, to make walking along it easier, to provide more accessibility for prams, and to offer more amenities such as picnic areas. Some people suggested improvements to the entrances to the village so that they all had signs and flowerbeds. Others were keen to protect green verges, often damaged by parked cars, and suggested that the larger ones could be turned into attractive garden areas (eg around Tesco).

Many respondents make positive comments about the trees and abundance of public green spaces. They like the greenery, shrubs and flowers throughout the village, and also at the entrances to the village. There were calls to improve tree management in some areas, eg on Slough Road by Ruscombe Gardens, and for our hedgerows and footpaths to be looked after better. There were concerns about the lack of protection for trees generally, and trees being cut down without being replaced.

## BUILT ENVIRONMENT/HOUSING

- **To respond to the housing needs of the community by supporting well-designed, sympathetic and sustainable development which provides suitable housing for people of all ages and means.**
- **To encourage and support appropriate flood protection.**

A number of residents noted the wide variety of housing styles and types, which often sit side by side, and liked the resulting diversity and inclusivity. Others wanted to keep a mix of housing in any new development, to create a mixed community of young and old, wealthy and not-so-wealthy, families, couples and singles, and for any new housing to have plenty of green space, gardens and trees, to fit in with the rest of the village. There was a call for no tall buildings to be built within two miles of the church.

There were requests for more thought to go into granting planning consent and for tighter planning enforcement around the village generally. A few people felt that some of the recent re-development of houses was not in keeping with the character of the village. One cited the new housing at the end of Slough Road not having much frontage in contrast with other houses along that stretch. Others complained about building projects which are started without any

planning application or notification, and have to get retrospective planning permission. There were also complaints about the 'constant flaunting of planning legislation which creates the need for expensive and time-consuming enforcement procedures'.

Some residents living in the east end of the village found the building work in that area very stressful. They claimed that landowners regularly breached the planning conditions which were imposed to protect the amenity of the local residents.

There was also general concern about development on the flood plain and calls for tighter restrictions on development on the flood plain and green belt. Some residents thought there should be restrictions about concreting over front gardens which prevents water soaking away, especially after a flood, and reduces the greenery in the village.

The lack of suitable housing for younger people was a serious cause of concern. Many felt that the village is becoming unaffordable for young local families, and that there aren't enough options in the village for people who would like to downsize and free up larger houses. Some residents mentioned the lack of availability of housing association properties, and the high cost of private renting and mortgages resulting in young people being forced to live with their parents into adulthood, or to live in properties which were too small for the number of occupants. Someone commented that the more recent social and mixed housing developments in the village were badly laid out and of poor quality.

It was felt that some areas are run down and need regeneration. Some people perceived a division between the east and west side of the village, with the east looking more untidy and not so affluent. There appears to be a palpable 'them and us' tension in Datchet; the perception being that no one cares about the Horton end of the village which was frequently expressed by residents living in this area. Some felt that the issue was magnified by limited integration of the traveller community, who are a key part of village life too. It was suggested that we need to find ways to encourage people of all backgrounds to live side by side

### **LOCAL ECONOMY/BUSINESS**

- **To support existing local businesses and encourage new small and medium-sized businesses and shops which provide sustainable employment opportunities and enable people to shop locally.**

People like the sense of community created by the pub, cafes and restaurants, the village schools, churches and the Bridge. Many commented on the importance of retaining essential services in the village – health centre, chemist, schools – and amenities such as pubs, restaurants and cafes. There were requests for more, essential shops in the village, such as a post office, bank, baker, greengrocer, butcher, etc.

At the same time, there were concerns about the suitability of some of the commercial development around residential areas such as Mill Place and Ditton Road.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

- **To identify and support appropriate infrastructure developments which reflect the community's needs and keep it an attractive, well-planned and safe place for everyone.**

Some people thought that certain areas of the village felt dark and unsafe. There were calls for better lighting in areas such as on Horton Road and Ditton Road, around the train footbridge and by the scout hut, on the roads to Windsor and Slough, and improved maintenance of street-lighting generally.

The survey coincided with the publication of the Borough Local Plan and many people commented on the infrastructure which would be needed to support 350 new houses in Datchet, such as doctors, schools and roads. There were concerns about the existing infrastructure already being stretched, particularly medical services. At the same time, it was suggested that, with the right infrastructure plan in place, it could represent an exciting chapter for the village and community.

There were several comments about aircraft noise, the third runway at Heathrow, the new River Thames Scheme and the threat of flooding.

## COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE/LEISURE

- **To support initiatives which protect and enhance village assets, community facilities and services (including schools and healthcare, leisure and recreation) to meet residents' needs.**

There were concerns about the availability of appointments at the health centre – a subject which is being dealt with by the Clinical Commissioning Group.

Residents enjoy the varied social mix, and richness of organisations and events in the village for all age groups and interests.

There were suggestions for improvements to leisure facilities at the Recreation Ground included additional planting, adding a concession for a kiosk and a toilet, and encouraging more use of the Rec. It was also suggested that more use might also be made of the village hall, eg a gym or swimming pool, with more activities held there generally for people of all age groups.

The issues of anti-social behaviour, crime, and lack of social cohesion were often raised. The anti-social behaviour of some young males was highlighted as a particular concern, especially on the Rec. This behaviour included riding motorbikes on the Rec, sniffing gas canisters, burning playground equipment, and using catapults. As a result, a number of residents felt that the Rec was not always a safe place for children and adults to enjoy. Many want to see these issues tackled. It was suggested that there should be more for young people to do in the village, and improved integration of different groups living here. It was felt that encouraging a better understanding of different views and ways of life could start at our local schools, among pupils and parents.

## INFRASTRUCTURE/HIGHWAYS

- **To support measures which reduce traffic congestion, ensure Datchet's roads and pavements, footpaths and cycle paths provide safe and accessible routes and allow people with limited mobility, prams and wheelchairs to move more easily around the village.**

### TRAFFIC CONGESTION

It is generally felt that the village is not equipped to deal with modern traffic levels. There were many calls to reduce the amount of traffic coming through the village and to introduce traffic calming measures.

The type of vehicles using the village as a cut-through, or as a back-route to Heathrow, was also a concern, in particular coaches and HGVs. It was said that these wider vehicles often result in traffic mounting the pavements on some of the more narrow roads, putting pedestrians and fast-moving vehicles in close proximity.

There were suggestions to introduce traffic-calming measures such as speed restrictions and cameras. Some respondents recommended that traffic flow studies be undertaken so that we understand better the disruption, noise and pollution levels caused by traffic. There were suggestions to introduce width- or time-restrictions on certain vehicles.

There were worries that new housing development would introduce additional congestion. The issue of a bypass was frequently raised with some residents asking for feasibility studies of different options. Suggestions included from Mill Place area to Albert Bridge, from London Road to Slough Road; and from Majors Farm Road to Horton Road to Southlea Road.

### LEVEL CROSSINGS

Although residents appreciate the convenience of regular train services to and from London, there were many complaints about the delays caused by the level crossings and also the new 10-coach trains. There were also several requests to extend the London-bound platform to accommodate the longer trains so that the barriers could be lifted sooner. Many residents wanted reductions in noise and air pollution from traffic (and aircraft) to be reduced; some suggested that signs should be erected telling drivers to switch off their engines at the level crossings. (South West Railways has plans to double the amount of trains through the village from December 2018.)

### BUSES

Those who commented on the bus services felt that they could be improved with greater frequency and lower prices to tempt drivers to leave their cars at home and use public transport. It was also noted that a better bus link with Slough would improve connectivity with the new Crossrail/Elizabeth line service.

### CYCLING

Residents felt that village roads are not very cycle-friendly. A number of people mentioned the lack of joined-up cycling routes connecting with neighbouring villages, and the lack of bicycle parking. There were requests that areas where cyclists are permitted to ride on pavements should be clearly defined.

## PEDESTRIANS

Pedestrian safety was an issue particularly due to the high levels of traffic and speeding. People complained about difficulties crossing roads, traffic speeds, especially on narrow and residential roads. There were suggestions for pedestrian crossings at a number of points in the village, such as Churchmead, Eton End, High Street, and Horton Road. Some said that cars inconsiderately parked on pavements forced pedestrians to walk on the road. A wheel-chair user and people with prams highlighted the difficulties they experienced in getting around the village. Suggestions were made that kerbstones could be lowered by grinding them down rather than removing them. Someone commented that our pavements are an ugly patchwork of repairs.

There were calls for improvements in the quality of pavements and footpaths generally. Quite a few residents wanted to see improvements on the Thames Path to Windsor. There was also a request to make it safer for children to walk or cycle into Windsor.

## PARKING

Parking is a big issue for residents, particularly illegal and inconsiderate parking as well as lack of parking facilities in some areas.

There were complaints about train passengers and shoppers parking in residential roads instead of the station car park. There were suggestions that parking at the station could be free for Datchet residents to encourage use of the car park and make it easier for people to shop locally.

There were complaints about people without permits using resident permit parking spaces, about parking on verges particularly Slough Road near Whites Lane, and Horton Road near the water treatment works. Residents also claimed that some roads were being used for commuter car parking. These included Eton Road, Ruscombe Gardens and the lay-by on Windsor Road opposite Beaulieu Close. Others said that the parking and traffic along Eton Road is getting worse, particularly around school times.

Parking on pavements was also a cause for concern. Some residents experienced difficulties getting into and out of their driveway on to a busy road (Ditton Road) because parking on the pavements reduced visibility. There were also complaints about the number of vans and commercial vehicles parked on Horton Road; and about the vans which use Slough Road as 'an overnight truck stop'.