

Datchet votes ‘yes’ to the Neighbourhood Plan!

Residents vote resoundingly in favour of the Datchet Neighbourhood Plan in May’s referendum. Alison Crampin reports

Thank you to everyone who voted in the recent Datchet Neighbourhood Plan (DNP) referendum. The results were 1014 ‘yes’ votes and 127 ‘no’ votes. The next stage is for the Plan to be adopted formally by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead within eight weeks of the referendum. The DNP will form part of the statutory development plan for our area alongside the Borough’s Local Plan. This statutory status gives neighbourhood plans far more weight than some local documents such as parish plans, community plans and village design statements.

What does this mean for Datchet?

Datchet residents will now have more of a say in how our village develops in the next 10 years or so. The DNP’s planning policies must now be taken into account by RBWM when deciding planning applications. These policies address the issues you raised in various village-wide surveys and consultations and cover important topics such as flooding, housing, local character and heritage, biodiversity and the environment, air pollution, safe walking and cycling, community assets, sustainable construction, and more.

It is encouraging to note that RBWM is already citing the DNP in its decisions on planning applications, along with the Datchet Design Guide which was also compiled with the help of the DNP team based on your feedback.

What about non-policy actions?

A Neighbourhood Plan focuses primarily on the use and development of land but, during the evidence-gathering process, you also told us about other things you’d like to change or protect in the village. Some of these issues weren’t covered directly by planning and couldn’t be included as DNP policies, however, they have been included in Chapter 10 of the

DNP, under the heading 'Non-Policy Actions'. These are a series of actions considered by the community to be important matters to be followed up by the Parish Council. They cover a variety of topics such as biodiversity and green spaces; traffic, transport and getting around; heritage; flooding; and street furniture. It's now up to the Parish Council to take these actions forward, to discuss and act on your feedback, and to review the non-policy actions in line with the rest of the Neighbourhood Plan, as part any subsequent review, to take account of changing circumstances and community aspirations.

Plan delivery

It is important to monitor a neighbourhood plan once it is made. Planning applications in Datchet should be closely monitored and, where necessary, comments should be made in response to applications, explaining how the DNP's policies relate to the proposed development. Objections may be made where a scheme does not meet the policy requirements, or supportive comments where a scheme does comply and helps to deliver the DNP's aims. Subsequent decisions by the local planning authority should also be monitored to make sure the DNP's policies are being properly applied.

Most parish councils set up a Neighbourhood Plan Delivery Group to ensure the plan is implemented and to coordinate the delivery of specific projects or non-policy actions which have been identified by the local community as being important. At Datchet Parish Council's May meeting, it was agreed to set up a Working Group to deliver the Plan and two councillors were appointed to the group. The DNP team, which comprises mainly residents, is willing to support the group and help to familiarise it with the contents of the DNP which will have an impact on almost every aspect of the parish council's work. It is usual for the progress and delivery of a Neighbourhood Plan to be reviewed each year at the Annual Parish Meeting.

Extra funding

Having a Neighbourhood Plan will also mean more money for Datchet. Areas with a Neighbourhood Plan in place are eligible to receive 25% of the Community Infrastructure Levy collected from development within the Neighbourhood Area. This is 66% more than areas without a Neighbourhood Plan.

More information

You can read the Datchet Neighbourhood Plan and the Datchet Design Guide by visiting www.datchetneighbourhoodplan.org. You will also find additional information there, such as full details of the Non-Designated Heritage Assets, Local Green Spaces, Character Assessments of all areas of Datchet, air quality test results, pictorial information for the Conservation Area Statement, and survey results. Copies of the Plan are also available at the Library and at The Bridge. For more information about Neighbourhood Planning generally see <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/>

