

We're making progress!

Thanks to your help and support, we're now a step closer to preparing a Neighbourhood Plan for Datchet, says Alison Crampin

Thank you to everyone who gave up their free time on a cold Sunday in January to come to the Datchet Neighbourhood Plan (DNP) Drop-in Session at the Village Hall. The DNP team was delighted that so many residents were willing to share their thoughts and ideas. Creating a Neighbourhood Plan is a collaborative process and your input will help to make sure the Plan works well for the parish as a whole.

Presenting the evidence

The Drop-in Session was an opportunity for everyone to see the 'evidence' gathered during a series of Character Assessment walks around the village. There were colourful displays highlighting the key issues and residents were invited to add comments, noting what works well in Datchet and what could be improved by better planning. To help spark ideas, there was slide-show of more than 150 photographs of Datchet, and posters explaining what a Neighbourhood Plan can and can't do. There was also a display dedicated to traffic congestion and air quality, and an opportunity to find out more about flooding issues.

The DNP team was on hand throughout the day to answer questions and hear your thoughts. We needed to find out if the assessments had covered the most important planning issues. Was there anything we'd missed? Or anything you disagreed with? We were very grateful for all the amendments you suggested.

What you told us

You weren't short of ideas for improving Datchet although not everything you proposed can be tackled through the planning process. There were concerns about 'infill', such as houses being built in back gardens, and the scale of some redevelopment where a small house is developed into a much larger one. You were worried about the lack of small starter homes and properties suitable for down-sizing. Many want to see more support and care for the

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east side of the village with better infrastructure and development of the vacant plot at the junction of Holmlea Road and Horton Road. There was alarm about the state of some listed structures, such as the Grade II wall on London Road, and fears that the proposed new housing developments would result in increased flooding. You also expressed concern about anti-social behaviour, unofficial commercial activity and traffic problems, and unauthorised development of Green Belt land.

Litter and lighting

You told us that street lighting should be improved in some areas, for example on the footbridge over the railway line. Litter was a big issue and some suggested a monthly litter-pick by volunteers. Others thought that our streets should be cleaned more regularly, and there were questions about the maintenance of unadopted roads. Many thought that dustbins left out permanently at the front of houses and on The Green looked unsightly.

The village centre

When it came to regenerating the village centre, there were lots of ideas for shops you'd like to see, not least a post office, but you stressed the importance of keeping the special character of the Conservation Area and suggested it should be more clearly defined.

Traffic congestion

There was a great deal of concern about traffic congestion which you feared would increase with further development but there were also ideas for better traffic management including a one-way system, lower speed limits, and a longer platform at the station. There were complaints about HGV vehicles using smaller roads and calls for better signage in some areas, for example to warn drivers of the roundabout on Slough/Eton Road. You were worried about pollution and several people suggested that drivers should be asked to turn off their engines while waiting at the level crossing. Inconsiderate and dangerous parking was also a major issue, particularly around Eton Road at school drop-off and pick-up times, and on grass verges and across pavements.

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Pedestrians and cyclists

There were calls for better and safer cycle routes and more frequent bus services, particularly to Slough. You discussed ways we could reduce car usage; suggested improvements for pedestrians, such as repairs to footpaths and more crossings; and pointed out areas where narrow footpaths and overhanging greenery make it difficult and sometimes dangerous for pedestrians. There were also requests for more dropped kerbs for prams and mobility vehicles.

Natural environment

Our green open spaces and views into and out of Datchet are important to you, and you told us that views from the riverside in particular were being spoiled by some boats mooring for longer than permitted. There were requests for more plants and trees generally, with better maintenance of some communal planted areas, more protection for historic and important trees, and more provision for wildlife. There were also suggestions to allow access to the Willowfields (behind the Rec) from surrounding streets.

A number of ideas for making the village more welcoming included flowerbeds at the entrances, and signs indicating that Datchet is a historic Thameside village, or, as someone suggested, the home of the first car to make a recorded journey on English roads.

Key planning issues

Thanks to your feedback, we can now focus on the key planning issues for the village and start to develop policies for the Neighbourhood Plan which support the conservation and enhancement of Datchet's local character. The aim is to set out criteria for positive change through the planning system in areas which you've identified as being in need of upgrading or redevelopment.

www.datchetneighbourhoodplan.org

REPORT IT

Some issues raised at the Drop-in Session are covered by Datchet Parish Council (DPC) or the Borough Council (RBWM) rather than the Neighbourhood Plan so we will pass on your

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comments where appropriate. Problems with street lighting, street cleaning and litter bins, graffiti, fly-tipping, potholes, highways, traffic lights, road markings, overhanging trees and shrubs, verges, pavements, smoke, noise pollution, air quality, etc, are covered by RBWM.

You can report these on the Borough's website, see www3.rbwm.gov.uk/report

ENDS

Logo and photos follow

